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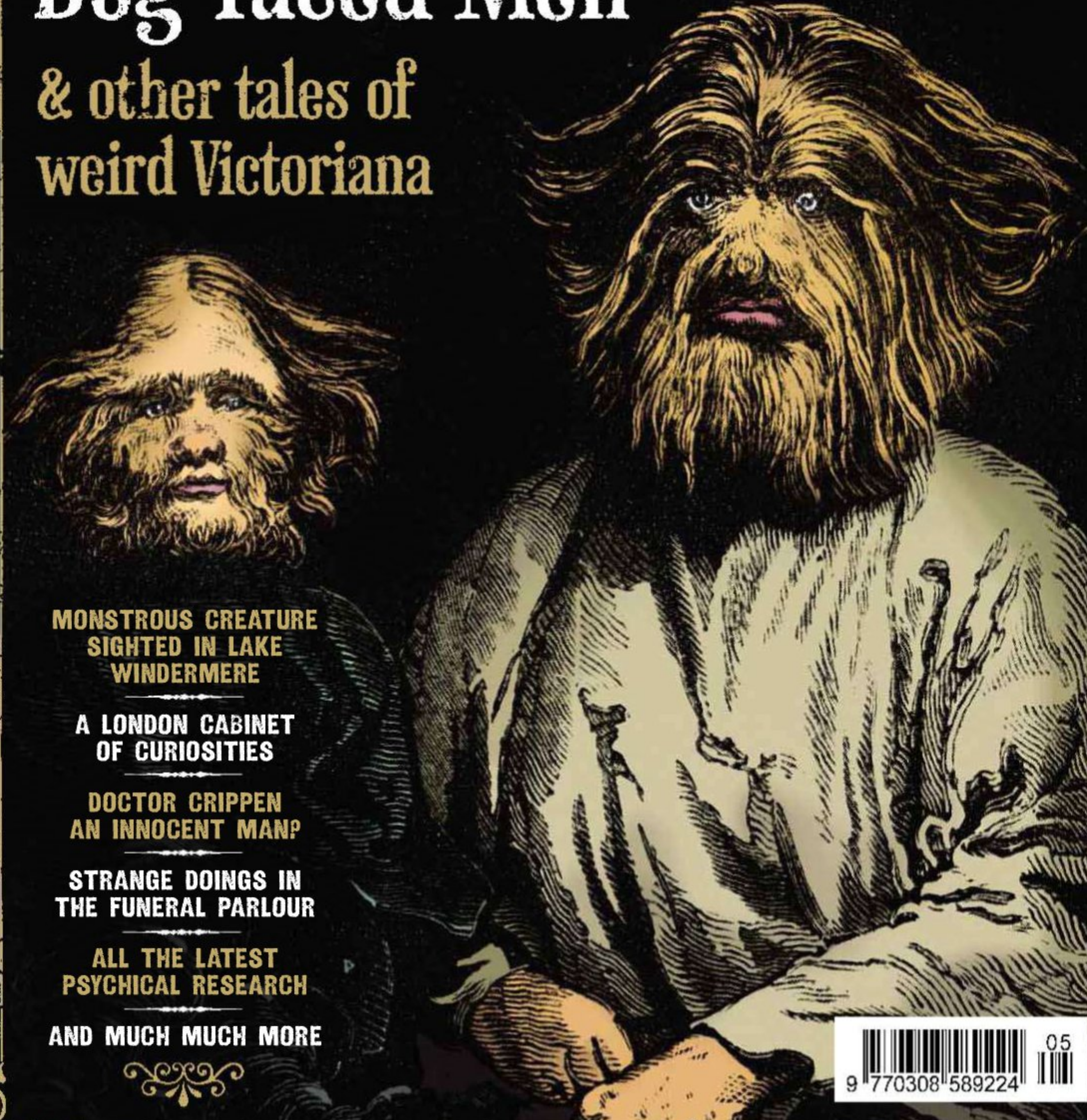

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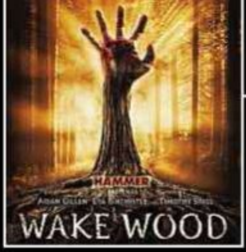

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editorial

Signs of the Times

American radio preacher Harold Camping has predicted that the world will end not in 2012 – as Hollywood and the wilder fringes of the New Age camp suggest – but on 21 May this year (see p55). His supporters are getting ready for The Rapture, the first sign of Judgement Day, when the saved will be whisked off to Heaven; the rest of us will have to endure five months of apocalyptic horrors before the world 'officially' ends on 21 October. Others have reminded us that this isn't the first time that Mr Camping has predicted the End: back before the Millennium, he was touting 1994 as the year that we should stop buying calendars. This, he has explained, was the result of a mathematical error, which he has now corrected. May the 21st it is, then…

Or is it? We're not sure what Mr Camping has been making of the terrifying, tragic events in Japan over the past week, but we imagine they are either providing further grist to his eschatological mill or he's frantically redoing his sums to bring the date forward. As we go to press, amidst uncertainty as to the outcome of attempts to deal with the damaged reactors at Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, the shock waves from the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster are spreading steadily outwards: foreigners flee the country, Californians panic-buy drugs, gas masks and Geiger counters – and a fake email, supposedly from the BBC and warning of toxic rains spreading across Asia, has apparently caused panic in the Philippines…

"It's called a 'Brazilian', you say?"

MARTIN ROSS

Atlantis Rising

Hugely destructive tsunamis of the kind that have caused such devastation along Japan's east coast have been in the news for other reasons. A US-led research team now claims to have discovered the location of Atlantis, this time to the north of Cadiz, Spain. There, submerged in extensive marshlands, they say they have found signs of a city destroyed by a tsunami thousands of years ago. (Reuters, 12 Mar 2011). It wouldn't be the first such contender in the region; in 2005, a similar claim was made for Spartel Island in the straits of Gibraltar, where seafloor deposits were believed to be consistent with the impact of a massive earthquake and tsunami 12,000 years earlier. Whether either of these finds is really of a 'lost city' – and whether that city has any relation to Plato's fabled Atlantis – remains to be seen. And while Japan may not be heading the way of Atlantis – despite the sudden topicality of such disaster movies as Higuchi Shinji's *The Sinking of Japan* – recent events can't but make us ponder the fragility of our modern world when confronting the forces of nature.

Cover concerns

Some readers have expressed concern at the cover of **FT273**, which illustrated the story of 'real-life Indiana Jones' Otto Rahn's quest for the Holy Grail and involvement with Himmler's SS (see this issue pp40–45). What was meant to be an eye-catching, comic-book style approach to the subject matter upset a few subscribers – largely because of the highly visible Swastika which was not always covered as intended by the address label. While most complaints were of a somewhat Pooterish "What will my postman think?" variety (to which we'd respond that these overworked functionaries are almost certainly too busy to care what's in your mail), some made the point that subscribers in certain parts of Europe might have a real problem receiving their copies. We'd like to apologise to those readers, as it seems to be the case that rather than being sent out in opaque envelopes the issues were in fact delivered in transparent ones. So, if any European subscribers find that their copies of **FT273** have mysteriously failed to appear, please email owen_whiteoak@dennis.co.uk and we'll send out a replacement in a plain brown envelope.

Errata

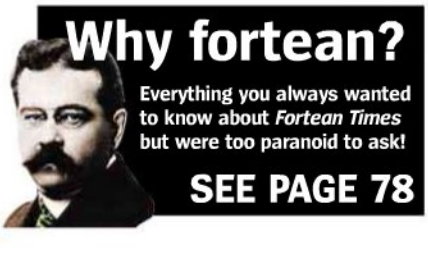
Dennis Lien writes to say that *Detective Comics* was not "the home of the first Superman story" (review of *75 Years of DC Comics* by Paul Levitz, **FT271:64**). That was *Action Comics* #1 (June 1938). *Detective Comics* featured Batman; his first appearance was in issue #27 (May 1939).

The current population of Jerusalem is 763,800, not "7.5 million" ("Flying Saucery" **FT273:26**). Thanks to Erwin Snelders for pointing this out.

DAVID SUTTON

BOB RICKARD

Paul Sieveking
PAUL SIEVEKING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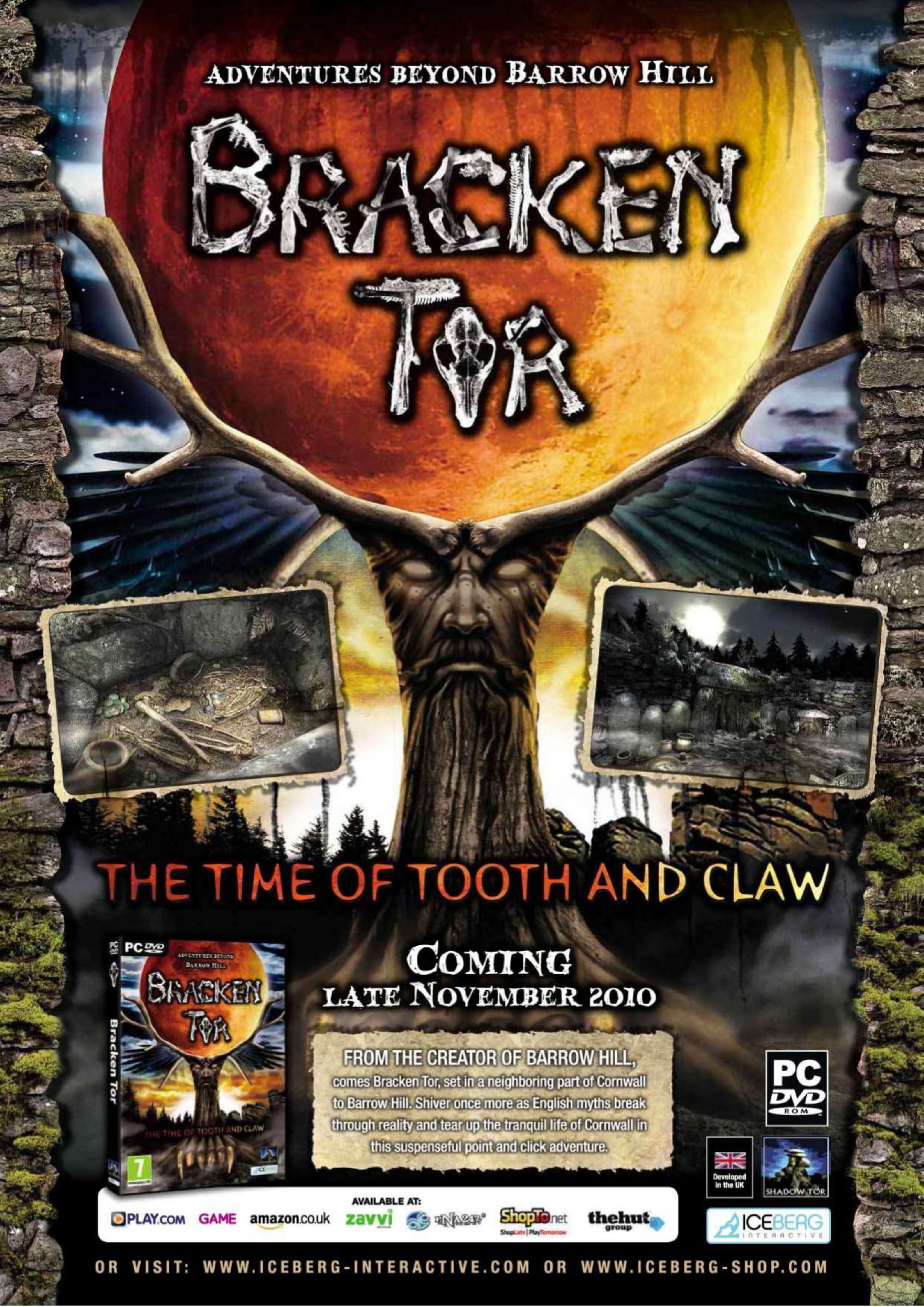
Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!

SEE PAGE 78



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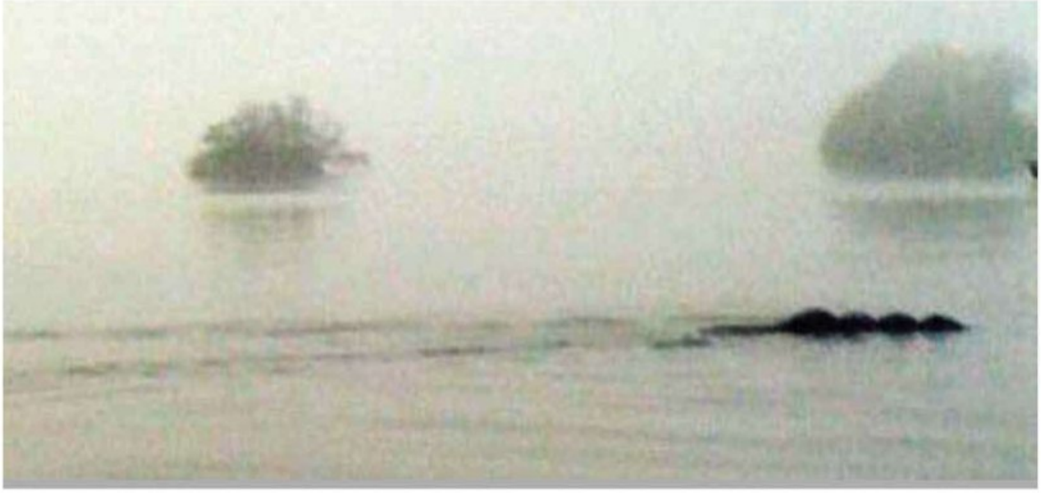
Bownessie photographed

Windermere's lake monster makes another return – and this time it's been caught on camera



CASCADE NEWS / TOM PICKLES

Tom Pickles, 24, took this picture with his cameraphone at 10.35am on 11 February while kayaking on Windermere, near Belle Isle. It shows something with four humps gliding through the still waters. Could it be the celebrated monster, 'Bownessie" (named after the town of Bowness on Windermere's banks)? "At first I thought it was a dog and then saw it was much bigger and moving really quickly at about 10mph [16km/h]. Each hump was moving in a rippling motion and it was swimming fast. It was about the size of three cars. I could tell it was much bigger underneath from the huge shadow around it. Its skin was like a seal's but its shape was completely abnormal, not like any animal I've ever seen before."

He and fellow kayaker Sarah Harrington, 23, who both work for CapGemini, an IT firm in Telford, Shropshire, watched the creature for about 20 seconds before it plunged out of sight and they raced back 1,000ft (300m) to the safety of the shore. "It was like an enormous snake," said Ms Harrington. "It freaked us all out." This is believed to be the eighth sighting in the past five years of the mysterious hump-backed creature, though sporadic sightings have been made since the 1950s. Various descriptions have seen its size range from 25ft to 70ft (8–21m). Pickles's photograph matches the description of a sighting from the shores of Wray Castle in 2006 by journalism lecturer Steve Burnip of Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire. It was serpent-like and 15ft (4.6m) long. "I'm really pleased that someone has finally got a really good picture of it," he said. "I know what I saw and it shocked me. It had three humps and it's uncanny the likeness between this and what I saw five years ago." (However, Pickles's picture shows *four* humps). In 2007, Linden Adams photographed a "huge creature" up to 13ft (4m) long at the southern end of Windermere.

Thomas Noblett, 48, managing director of Windermere's Langdale Chase Hotel, was swimming in the lake on 29 July 2009, training for an English Channel swim, accompanied by his colleague Andrew Tighe in a rowing boat. "We were going across the deeps, the deepest part of the lake," he said. "It was really calm. Then, all of a sudden, I felt something go past the back of my legs. It felt like a cruiser had gone past. Suddenly, this wave lifted me up. I stopped and asked, 'What the hell was that? Get me out of here.'" The whole experience, between 6.45am and 7am, lasted about 30 seconds. They concluded it must have been a huge creature of some kind – possibly a giant eel. Noblett and TV psychic Dean 'Midas' Maynard have twice scoured the lake with sonar equipment. "We're convinced there's something down there and we're going to get straight back out on the water," said Maynard.

> **"Each hump was moving in a rippling motion and it was swimming fast"**

Not everyone is convinced that something that size could exist in the 10½-mile (17km) long lake – although it reaches a maximum of 220ft (67m) at its deepest point, with various caves and shelves. Nigel Wilkinson, director of Windermere Lake Cruises, said his boat crew had over 100 years' experience out on the water in all conditions and had never spotted anything unusual. "We carry 1.3 million passengers, that's 2.6 million eyeballs, and none of them have ever brought Bownessie to our attention," he said. He speculated that Pickles's photo showed a group of otters. Lake ecologist Ian Winfield from the University of Lancaster suggested that what people had seen was a catfish from Eastern Europe – a catfish with four humps!?

In early March, John Phillips, 46, was walking by the lake with his wife and three daughters when he saw a large tyre cut open and lying on the footpath. He threw it in the water and was impressed by its resemblance to the humps in Pickles's photograph. "In the picture there was a wave of water behind the creature, which suggested it was moving at speed," he said. "I think it was being pulled with a rope by a person or a boat." This sounds unlikely; the humps were seen a long distance from the shore and surely Pickles and Harrington would have seen a boat, had there been one. *Westmorland Gazette, 17 Feb; Shropshire Star, D.Mail, D.Mirror, 18 Feb; (Cumberland) News & Star, 26 Feb; Mail on Sunday, 6 Mar 2011.*

HANGED IN ERROR?
Dr Crippen's infamous case is called into question

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ROAMING RACCOONS
Plus wandering wallabies and other out-of-place animals

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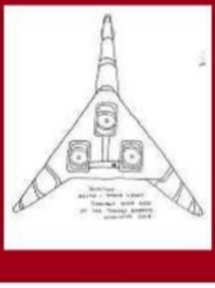

BRITAIN'S X-FILES
MoD records – a student hoax, crop circles, and a sky doughnut

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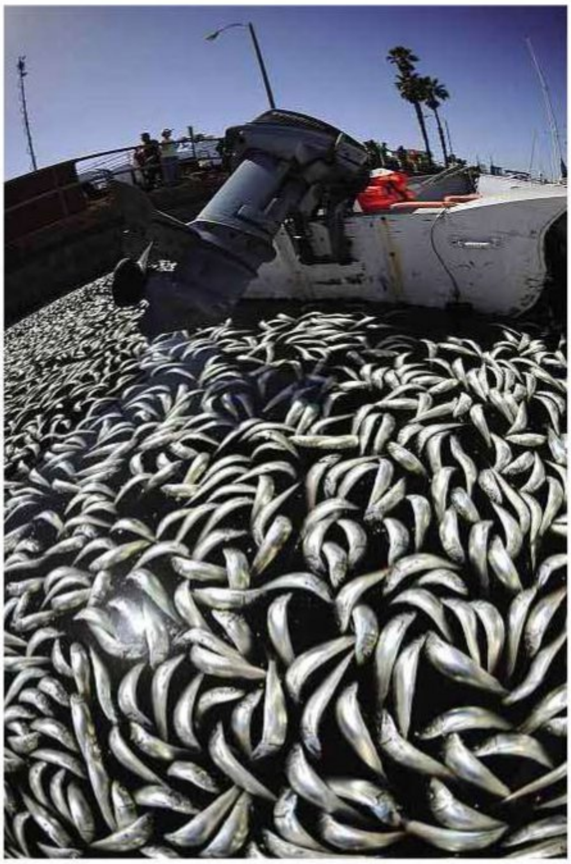
CRIPPEN & RACCOON PICS: GETTY IMAGES

Sardines on acid

On 7–8 March, a million or more sardines washed up dead at Redondo Beach, California, about 16 miles (26km) southwest of Los Angeles. They clogged Basins 1 and 2 of the north side of King Harbor Marina, where about 1,400 boats are moored, including about 500 with full-time residents. Twelve to 18 inches (30–46cm) of fish covered the seabed in Basin 1 and another thick layer coated the surface from the breakwall to the inner docks. With the temperature passing 68°F (20°C), the fish were beginning to stink and were attracting huge flocks of seagulls and other birds. In some places, the fishy carpet was so thick that boats were unable to leave the marina.

"It looks like what happens to goldfish when you don't change the water in the tank, mouth open and belly up," said City Manager Bill Workman. "Our early assessment is that this was oxygen depletion. This is similar to what we experienced five years ago, but that was distinctly a red tide event. This time there's no discoloration of the water, no associated foaming in the waves. There are no oil slicks or leaking of substances into the water." There was speculation that the fish died from lack of oxygen due to algæ, while some wondered if high winds overnight might have had something to do with it.

Then an investigative team led by David Caron, a University of Southern California professor of biological sciences, took samples and found traces of domoic acid, a powerful neurotoxin that caused the fish to become disoriented and swim chaotically into the marina; but Caron agreed that lack of oxygen was the ultimate cause of death. He suggested that more testing on the fish might be necessary. "We have not detected the toxins in the harbour at all. It is in the fish," he said. Wikipedia states that domoic acid, "the neurotoxin that causes amnesic shellfish poisoning (ASP), is a kainic acid analog, heterocyclic amino acid associated with certain harmful algal blooms… The increasing frequency and geographic extent of toxic algal blooms along populated coastlines is generally attributed to human activities." *Los Angeles Times, dailybreeze.com (Los Angeles), 8 Mar; BBC News, telegraph.co.uk, 9 Mar; [CNN] 15 Mar 2011. For mass fish and bird die-offs in December and January, see* ***FT272:4-5***.



GETTY IMAGES / AFP / GABRIEL BOUYS

EXTRA! EXTRA! FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

BOOTS KILL FISHERMAN

D.Mirror, 28 Oct 2010.

Drinking water unsafe for many Kiwis

The Press (Christchurch, NZ), 27 Oct 2010.

Invisible clothing takes shape

Canberra Times, 5 Nov 2010.

Feds: Jesus, Mary and Joseph used to smuggle cocaine

Washington (DC) Examiner, 20 Oct 2010.

Schoolboy on target at archery tournament

Teesdale Mercury (Barnard Castle), 15 Sept 2010.

Rain to raise water prices

The Australian Financial Review, 11 Nov 2010.

Dormice halt plan to build houses

D.Telegraph, 28 Sept 2010.

Squashed tomato sues for £24,000

D.Mail, 16 Oct 2010.

Dragons soothed by waffles

Saanich News (British Columbia), 17 Sept 2010.

Hunter arrested after shooting man he thought was a squirrel

NBC News, via Irish Independent, 13 Nov 2010.

Possum-throwing branded immoral

D.Telegraph, 23 Sept 2010.

HIRSUTE GIRL

Though she used to be called 'wolf girl' and 'monkey face', Supatra Sasuphan (or Nong Nat), an 11-year-old from the Bangkok suburb of Pranakom, is delighted that Guinness World Records has named her as the world's hairiest girl – it makes her more popular at school. She suffers from congenital hypertrichosis, with thick hair over her face, ears, arms, legs and back. This is due to a genetic mutation and is extremely rare.

The earliest authenticated example is Petrus Gonzales, born in the Canary Islands in 1556 and taken to France as a curiosity. He learned many languages and sired three hirsute children. In 1648, Aldrovandus called them "the family of Ambras", because he found their portraits in Ambras Castle in Austria. Their sort of hairiness was named "Ambras syndrome" by FAM Baumeister in 1993. (See **FT87:24** for a reproduction of Petrus Gonzales's portrait). Around 50 cases have been observed in the last 300 years (see "Hairy Tales" by Jan Bondeson, **FT209:46–51**). Several circus sideshow performers in the 19th and early 20th centuries, such as Julia Pastrana, had Ambras syndrome. Many of them worked as freaks and were promoted as having distinct human and animal traits. Before the disease was understood, sufferers were branded 'werewolves'.

Supatra's father Sammrueng, 38, a jewellery maker, said that when she was born she had to undergo two operations just to breathe, as her nostrils were only one millimetre wide. She spent the first 10 months of her life in hospital. "She has a lot of friends," he said. "She is just the same as any other little girl her age. But her teeth grow slowly and she can't see very well." Doctors tried to remove the hair with laser treatment when she was two years old but despite numerous sessions it kept growing back as thickly as before. Her hair has got thicker as she has grown up, so her mother Somphon (or Sompol), 38, has to cut it back regularly. *Sunday Mirror, 25 Mar 2007; D.Mail, 28 Feb 2011*.

There are around 40 known sufferers of Ambras sydrome in the world today, including Yu Zhenhuan, 31, a Chinese singer and saxophone player [**FT30:45–47**, **190:23**, **239:19**]. He is almost as hirsute as the Mexican Gomez brothers, who are two years older and have 98 per cent hair cover [**FT56:32**, **59:21**]. *FT* first heard about Supatra Sasuphan (Nong Nat) in 2004 [**208:14**].

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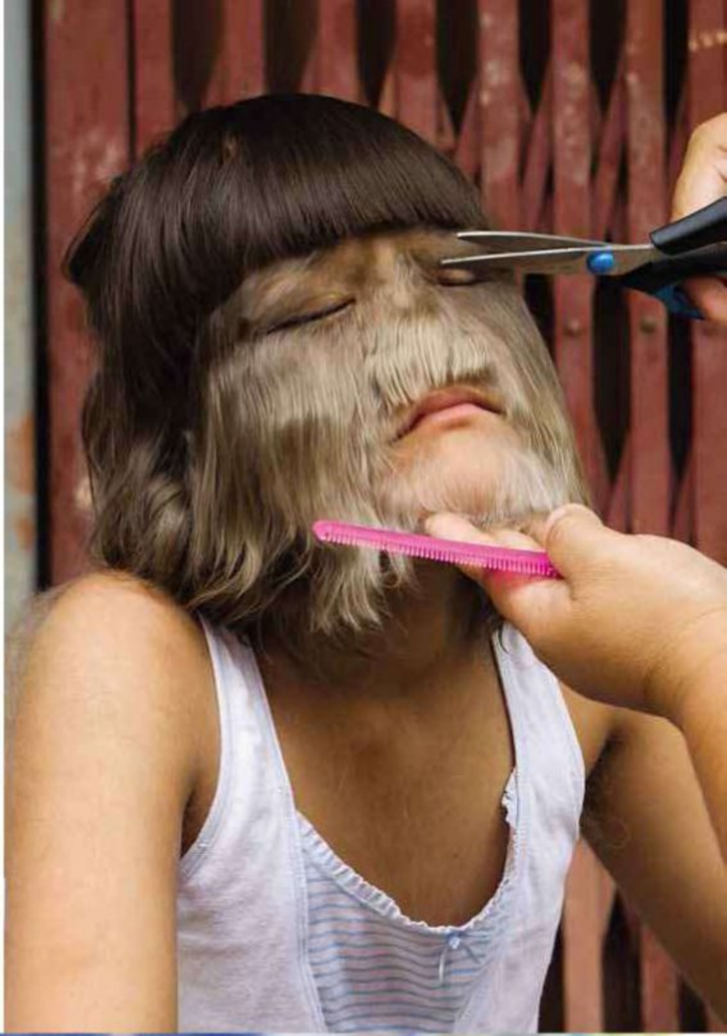

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A Finnish company is offering teddy bear owners a chance to send their stuffed animals on an adventure to the Arctic Circle. For between £75 and £113, Teddy Tours Lapland poses the bears on horseback safari rides, walks in the snow and campfire picnics. *[AP] 20 Dec 2010.*

DOGGONE MYSTERY

A dog that disappeared five years ago has returned to its owner, even though she had moved four times. Prince, the eight-year-old Shih Tzu, vanished while Myrna Carillo was staying with her mother. On 18 January, she got back from work to find Prince on her doorstep in Delano, California. *Sun, 21 Jan 2011.*

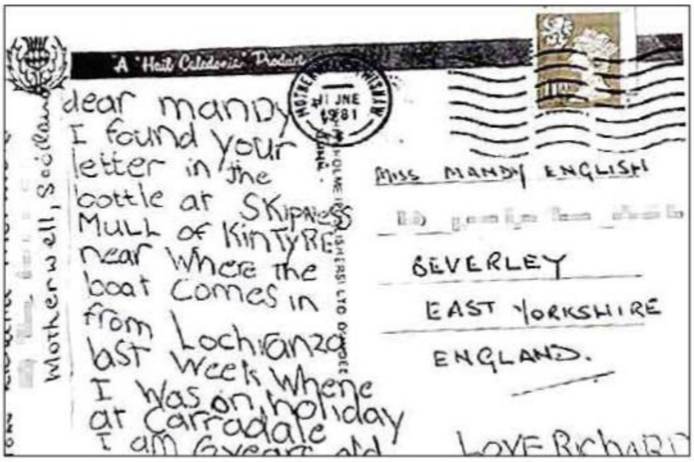
BANG ON TIME

The three children of PC Matt Rigby, of Salford, Greater Manchester, and his partner Lowry Dairsley were all born at 7.43. Ella was born at 7.43am in October 2005; Evie was born at 7.43pm on Boxing Day 2007; and Harrison was born at 7.43am on 20 January 2011. The *Sun* said the odds of this happening were 300 million to one – but Ben Goldacre, scourge of bad science reporting, shows that the odds are really only 518,000 to one. *Sun, 24 Jan; Guardian, 29 Jan 2011.*

MARTIN ROSS

Destiny or coincidence

A second chance at romance, fate found on Facebook



A 'Hail Caledonia' Product

Motherwell, Scotland

MOTHERWELL 1 JNE 1981

dear manDy
I found your
letter in the
bottle at SKipness
MULL of KinTyRE
near Where the
boat Comes in
from Lochranza
last Week Whene
I Was on holiday
at Carradale
I am 6year old

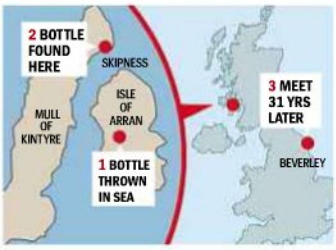
MISS MANDY ENGLISH
[redacted]
BEVERLEY
EAST YORKSHIRE
ENGLAND.

LOVE RichaRD

WRITTEN IN THE STARS?

Mandy English was 13 when she put a note requesting a penpal in a bottle and hurled it into the sea during a school trip to Scotland in 1979. Two years later, Richard Morwood, six, from Motherwell, Strathclyde, found the bottle on the beach during a family holiday in Carradale, Argyll, and sent a reply on a picture postcard (above) of the Isle of Arran: "Dear Mandy, I found your letter in the bottle at Skipness Mull of Kintyre near where the boat comes in from Lochranza last week when I was on holiday in Carradale. I am 6 years old. Love Richard". Mandy never wrote back because of the age difference.

At the beginning of February this year, Mandy was sorting through keepsakes when she found the 1981 postcard and realised its sender had the same name as Richard, her boyfriend since last June. She asked the road maintenance worker, now 36, if he remembered the message in the bottle – and it suddenly dawned on them that they had "met" before. "I realised he was the little lad who sent me that lovely postcard all those years ago," said Mandy, 44, a healthcare worker with two daughters and a son by a previous partner. "I was so shocked I nearly passed out. It's crazy that it was Richard who wrote to me. It's not like we've lived all our lives near each other. We grew up hundreds of miles apart… I thought about writing back, but he was a lot younger than me so I didn't. I completely forgot about him and only kept the card because I liked to collect them."

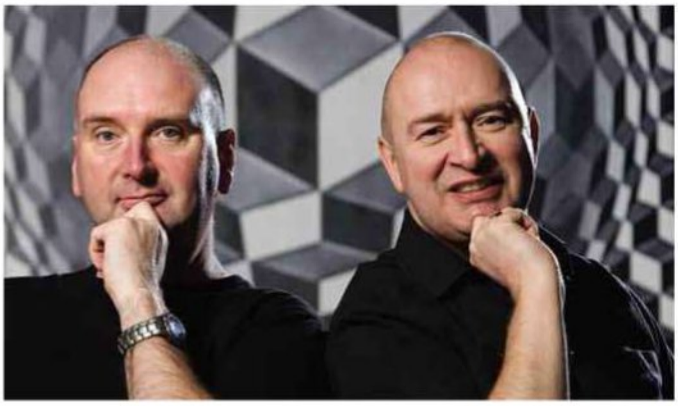


Richard moved to Hull, East Yorkshire, in 2003 and met Mandy, of nearby Beverley, seemingly by pure chance. He said: "When Mandy asked if I remembered sending a postcard, I said I had a vague recollection of finding the message, then my mum coaxing me into writing back… We definitely think fate brought us together. The most amazing thing is that in 1981 I signed off 'Love Richard' – and, now she's my girlfriend, I really *do* love her." *Sun, 8 Feb 2011.*

DOUBLE-TAKE

When friends of Graham Comrie logged on to Facebook, they feared someone had "hijacked" his life. Looking at the social networking site, Mr Comrie discovered that the other man, Graham Cormie, is not imitating him but is just eerily similar in appearance and lifestyle. Both are professional photographers, both are balding and married to redheads, with two daughters and Lhasa Apso dogs as pets. Besides the transposition of letters in their surnames, Mr Comrie is 45 and lives in Aberdeen, while Mr Cormie is 47 and lives about 10 miles (16km) away, in Ellon. Both men are set to celebrate their silver wedding anniversaries in 2011, in July and September.

"The freaky part was when we saw each other's profile pictures," said Mr Comrie. "I did a double-take. We've checked and we are definitely not related. We keep on getting messages from each other's friends on Facebook with people mistaking us all the time. So we've had to change our pictures so people don't get us confused. We've joked that one of us would have to change our name – but neither of us is backing down." *Scotsman, 30 Dec 2010.*

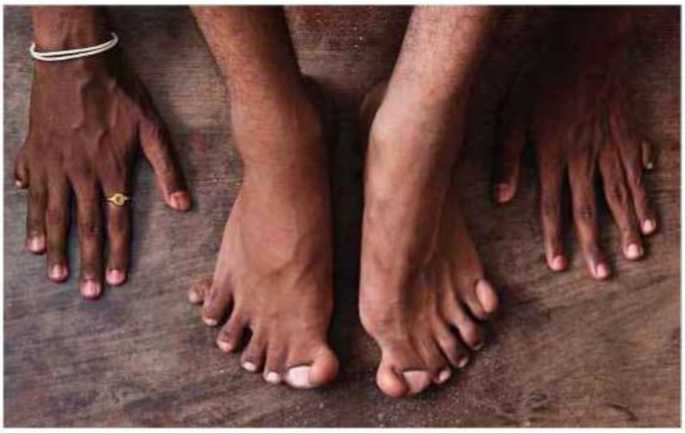


NEWSLINE

ABOVE: Even Graham Cormie and Graham Comrie can hardly tell each other apart.

Added bonus features

A selection of digital excesses, plus two tooth truths



BARCROFT MEDIA

EXTRA FINGERS AND TOES

Haramb Ashok Kumthekar, a 24-year-old Indian business graduate, was born with 12 fingers and 14 toes. The Guinness world record for polydactyly is held by two Indian children, Pranamya Menaria and Devendra Harne, who each have 12 fingers and 13 toes. Haramb doesn't hold the official record because, technically, some of his fingers are conjoined and are not classed as separate digits. However, he is recognised by the Indian equivalent of the *Guinness Book of Records*, the *Limca Book of Records*. While each of Haramb's extra fingers and toes have separate bones, they don't all boast nerve endings and he is unable to move them or feel them all properly. While he is proud of his extra digits, he admits that it can be frustrating at times, especially when it comes to finding shoes or gloves. *Ananova, 17 Mar 2010.*

He is proud of his extra digits but gloves are a problem...

In March 2010, Li Jinpeng, a six-year-old Chinese boy with 15 fingers and 16 toes, had surgery at a hospital in Shenyang, Liaoning province, to remove 11 surplus digits. He had four fingers on one hand and three on the other fused together. Most extra digits appear on the little finger side of the hand; however, this child had the much rarer condition of central polydactyly, in which the middle fingers and toes are duplicated. *[R] Metro, D.Mail, 24 Mar; Sun, 13 April 2010.*

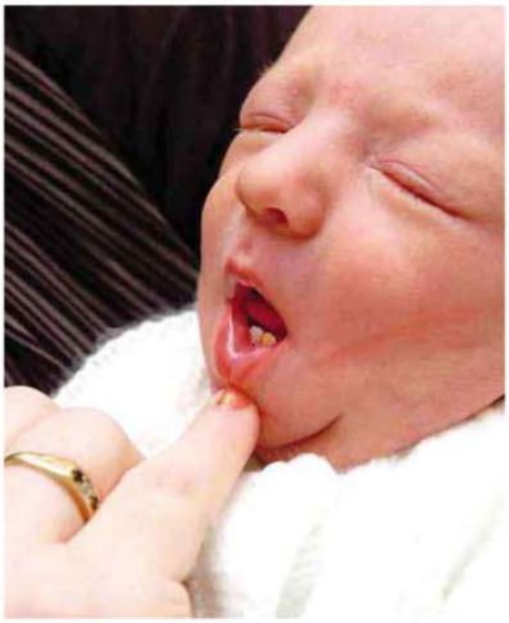
Another Chinese boy with extra digits – Ouyang Guangchun, 12, from Songpo village in Hunan province, who has 12 fingers and 12 toes – won't be having surgery as the extra digits function normally. Strange to tell, three months before his birth, the family's sow had a piglet with eight legs, two mouths and four ears. "The pig died two days later," said the boy's mother. "It possibly was a bad omen for the family." *http://web.orange.co.uk, 21 July 2010.*

DENTAL ANOMALIES

- John Giblin from Faversham in Kent, who was toothless for 50 years, grew a new front tooth at the age of 82. He had worn dentures since his 30s. "It is all a bit embarrassing," he said, "especially as it is in the dead centre front of my mouth. If it isn't taken out soon I'll knock it out." *D.Mirror, 29 Oct 2010.*

Third dentition in extreme old age is a recognised though rare medical phenomenon. For a roundup of 37 examples, both historical and contemporary, see **FT48:68–69, 135:21, 155:23**. Gould and Pyle (*Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine*, 1896) mention a further 24 cases from the medical literature.

- Oliver James was born with two front teeth – lower incisors to be precise – something that happens in about one in 3,000 births. His mother, Joanne Jones, 31, from Haverhill in Cambridgeshire, said: "Everyone who comes to visit wants to look at his teeth." She has decided to bottle-feed him. *Metro, 14 Jan 2011.*



SWNS / MASONS

TOP: Haramb Ashok Kumthekar has 12 fingers and 14 toes. **LEFT:** Oliver James showing his congenital teeth.

SIDELINES...

DEFOE RESCUED

Coastguards were puzzled by a call from someone stuck on a Scottish island who was reluctant to reveal his name. All became clear when he finally admitted: "My name is Daniel Defoe". (His namesake wrote *Robinson Crusoe*.) Forth Coastguard plucked Mr Defoe and his female friend off Cramond Island on 25 January after they were cut off by the tide. *Metro, 27 Jan 2011.*

BEEFHEART'S MAGIC

Don Van Vliet, the blues/rock bandleader known as Captain Beefheart who died on 17 December 2010, was able to change channels on a television set using his psychic powers, according to Richard Perry, the producer of his first album *Safe as Milk* (1967). Perry said that Beefheart could do this in unfamiliar environments where he had no opportunity to conceal a remote control in advance. *Times, 24 Dec 2010.*

JAUNDICED VIEW

A report in the *Daily Telegraph* on 7 December began: "Pagan prisoners are allowed four days off work every year for festivals that celebrate promiscuity and lactating sheep."

SMOKING RAT

Noname, a pet rat, almost burnt down its owner's house after removing a smouldering cigarette from an ashtray and hiding it in its cage's straw. Nelly Banks, 43, was woken at 3am by smoke filling her house in Morecambe, Lancashire. The fire brigade doused the flames, and both Miss Banks and pet escaped unharmed. *Metro, 10 Dec 2010.*

UPSETTING THE GODS

Trustees of the Library of Avalon in Glastonbury, Somerset, announced that three Egyptian deities – Djehuti (Thoth), god of scholarship, Maat, goddess of righteousness and order, and Seshat, goddess of documentation – could be provoked into action by the closure of public libraries. *Metro, 21 Jan 2011.*

SIDELINES...

AND THE SAME TO YOU

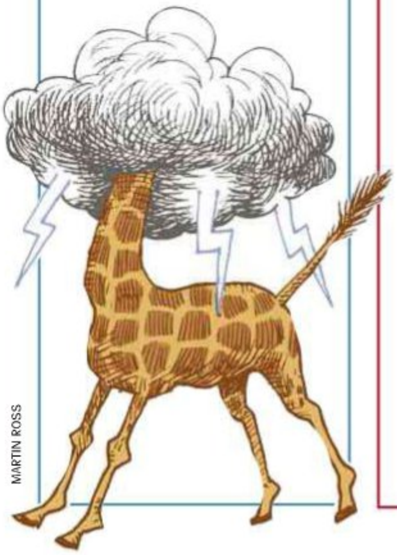
A 39-year-old secretary working for "Mr A", one of the world's richest property tycoons, falsely claimed to be pregnant with his child and threatened to tell his wife unless he paid her £3 million or bought her a flat, Southwark Crown Court in London heard on 9 December. Jurors failed to agree, and a retrial was ordered on 21 January. The blackmailer's name is Fuk Wu. *D.Telegraph, 10 Dec 2010, 22 Jan 2011.*

ONE FOR THE BIRDS

Dave Roberts, 31, a maths teacher, has opened the country's first hotel for chickens on a friend's farm in Helston, Cornwall. He has built four coops and has already taken dozens of bookings for Easter and the summer when the chickens' owners are on holiday. He has a chauffeur service to pick up the guests and charges 75p per bird per night. *Sun, Metro, 28 Jan 2011.*

GIRAFFE STRUCK DOWN

Hamley, a seven-year-old giraffe that featured in the television show *Wild at Heart*, was killed by lightning in a thunderstorm on 5 November at South Africa's Glen Afric reserve, where the ITV series – starring Stephen Tompkinson as a vet – is filmed. The "playful and charming" animal had been an on-screen favourite for five years. *D.Mail, Sun, 10 Nov 2010.*



MARTIN ROSS

ERRANT ANIMALS

THOUGH NOT NATIVE TO THESE SHORES, SOME EXOTIC COLONISERS KEEP APPEARING

BNPS

ABOVE: John Rothwell spotted an unusual visitor to his Hampshire garden – could raccoons have started a colony here?

ROAMING RACCOONS

John Rothwell photographed a North American raccoon in his back garden in Poulner, near Ringwood, Hampshire, on 31 January. "We've had rubbish bags torn apart in the last few days and I'd been blaming next door's cat," said Mr Rothwell, 57. "I was looking out from the conservatory just after midnight and saw this thing and couldn't figure out what it was." As the creature wandered closer to the light, he realised it was a raccoon. "It wandered round the garden then got up on its hind legs and started drinking from the bird bath. I dread to think what I'm going to see next – maybe a tiger." After the initial sighting, the raccoon returned four times, and ate peanuts left in the garden for hedgehogs.

About 10 days after Mr Ringwood's initial sighting, Sally Morse was driving to work when she saw a raccoon about 6am crossing a country lane at Redlynch, 10 miles (16km) north of Poulner. "As it moved across the road, I noticed its banded, slightly bulbous tail," she said. "As it reached the verge, it stopped and turned around to take a look and I recognised it instantly as a raccoon with its very distinctive white face with a pointed snout and black around the eyes." An RSPCA spokesman said that another raccoon was found in a tree in Christchurch, about 10 miles (16km) south of Poulner, in 2009 – and as it was a good 3,000 miles from its usual habitat, he suggested it was an escaped pet. But could there be a breeding raccoon population in the southern English countryside? *Bournemouth Echo, 1 Feb; Salisbury Journal, 2+10 Feb; D.Mirror, 3 Feb 2011.*

"I noticed its banded and slightly bulbous tail"

WANDERING WALLABIES

An albino wallaby – with joey in pouch – was spotted hopping through a forest about 80 miles (130km) northeast of Amsterdam in the Netherlands in April 2010. Rene van Hes of Oldeberkoop took a photograph of the animals in the Frisian Woodlands as he was driving home from work on 21 April. He said there was a small colony of brown wallabies living in the area since 10 escaped from a local farm in 2005 when children left a gate open. Most were rounded up, but a few remained at large and bred to the extent that some became road kill. Mr van Hes had seen two that had been hit by cars in the past few years – but no one has reported seeing white ones before. Albinos are as rare in the wallaby population as they are among humans. *(Adelaide) Sunday Mail, 25 April 2010.*

In May 2009, a wallaby with joey in tow was observed hopping round a garden in Cornwall; and in July, one was spotted beside the road to Moretonhampstead on

AP PHOTO

ABOVE: This wallaby might seem a long way from home, but they have been sighted regularly in Britain for many years now.

the eastern slopes of Dartmoor. A month later and 15 miles (24km) away, another (or possibly the same one) was seen wandering round a field in Teignmouth in Devon. In early June 2010, Peter Glaser was driving home when he saw and photographed a wallaby (above) near a lane in St Breward, near Bodmin in Cornwall. "It's not shy," he said. "I could look right into its eyes." It is thought to be a male that escaped from a farm in 2007, and appears to have teamed up with a female, who was later pictured with a joey in her pouch.

One colony of red-necked wallabies has been living on the Isle of Man for many years. Descendents of escapees from a wildlife park, they are now an accepted part of the landscape. Scotland has its own colony of about 60 wallabies living on an island in Loch Lomond, but because of the impact they have on the vegetation, there is talk of a cull. The famous Peak District wallabies were supposed to have died out, but one was photographed in 2010 in the Roaches. Promoted as low-carbon lawnmowers, they are increasingly being kept as pets to graze their owners' lawns and paddocks. Perhaps as they escape their mundane gardening chores, more will roam free. *BBC Wildlife, Sept 2009; D.Telegraph, 14 June 2010.*

"It beats having birds and squirrels in your garden"

NO
KANGAROOS
IN
AUSTRIA

In September 2010, Brian Hooson, 33, photographed a 4ft (1.2m) wallaby in the garden of his father Brian in Keighley, West Yorkshire. At the times of the report in the *Sun* (7 Sept 2010), Mr Hooson Senior was feeding the marsupial, which he named Wally. "It beats having birds and squirrels in your garden," he said. In 2009, the *Keighley News* also reported a sighting, and claimed the animal was a male that had escaped from a farm in Barnoldswick.

Tourists to Austria can buy T-shirts with the slogan "No kangaroos in Austria" because people with a poor grasp of geography sometimes confuse the country with Australia; however, in June 2010 a five-year-old male kangaroo called Sumsi disappeared from a private zoo in the southern Austrian village of Preding, and in the subsequent weeks it kept locals busy by popping up and then quickly getting away again. In mid-August, local firefighters sealed off a cornfield after a sighting – but to no avail. And a feeding station set up by kangaroo-crazy kids failed to lure the errant marsupial. *[AP] 19 Aug 2010.*

SIDELINES...

CROC HORROR

Gena, a 14-year-old crocodile at an oceanarium in the Ukrainian city of Dnipropetrovsk, was listless after swallowing a mobile phone dropped by a woman as she tried to photograph it. Aquarium workers initially didn't believe Rimma Golovko, but then her Nokia started ringing in Gena's stomach. The poor reptile hadn't eaten or had a bowel movement in four weeks, and appeared depressed and in pain. Keepers were contemplating surgery. *Guardian, 21 Jan 2011.*

RANDY REPTILES

Sonic booms created by Israeli warplanes over the Hamat Gader crocodile-breeding farm in the Golan Heights were stimulating the sex drive of 100 confused male crocs. They had begun their mating calls, apparently thinking the booms were the calls of rival males in their territory. *Metro, Sun, 20 Dec 2010.*

BUNCH OF CLOWNS

The travelling circus promised performing crocodiles and monkeys, "orcs and turantons", jugglers and midgets. "When the show started, they had a few poodles and one crocodile, and the artistes kept falling off their bicycles," said Igor Kalmuk, director of the palace of sport in the Belarusian city of Vitebsk, where the Russian circus performed. He said some of the performers seemed drunk (though they were breathalysed and turned out to be sober). Thousands of tickets had been sold and the police were investigating. *BBC News, 11 Jan 2011.*

MARTIN ROSS

SIDELINES...

WINGED SPY

A griffon vulture captured in the desert city of Hyaal in Saudi Arabia was carrying a GPS transmitter and a tag from Tel Aviv University, and residents suspected a "Zionist plot". The security services held it in custody on suspicion of spying for the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad, but wildlife experts said the bird was part of a migration study. Prince Bandar bin Saud al-Saud arranged for its release. *BBC News, 5 Jan; The Australian, 13 Jan 2011.*

THUMB TRAPS KILLERS

A thumb found in a car park in Ilford, Essex, on 10 March 2010 after it was seen falling from the sky was the only body part ever found of restaurant worker Mahmood Ahmad, 40, who was snatched three days earlier in Watford. He was killed by a gang including Mohammed Riaz, his sister's ex-husband, who was trying to track her down. The thumb appeared to have been severed by a butcher's band saw. Riaz and four others were on trial for murder. *BBC News, 13 Jan 2011.*

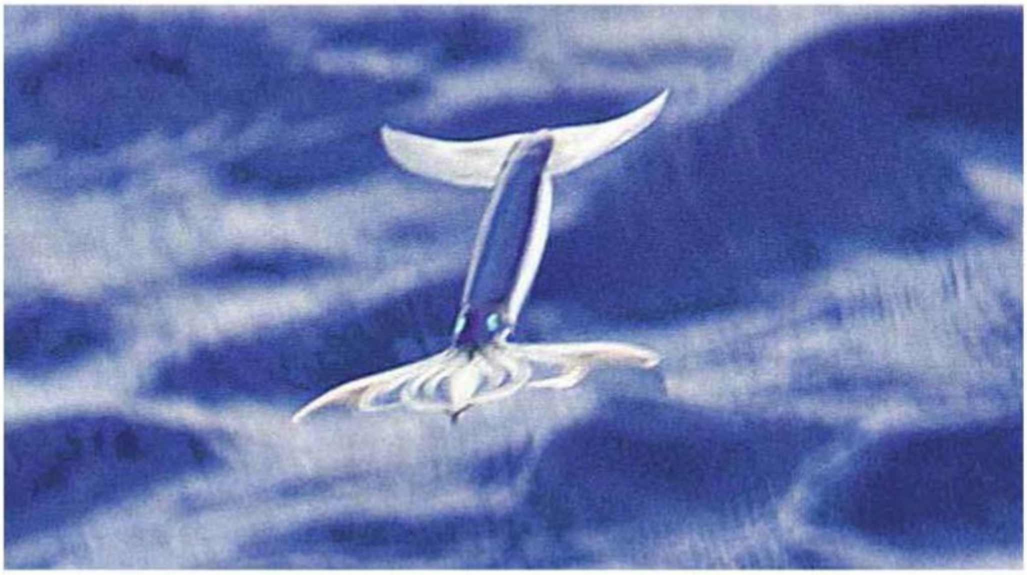
TOO DEVOTED

A woman harassed a Hindu priest, calling him 12,000 times in 20 months, because she thought he was God. Nirmal Bains, 56, admitted to magistrates in Walsall, West Midlands, that she had telephoned Bhagat Jaspal Bhatti to get his blessing for "every task she did". *D.Telegraph, 19 Nov 2010.*

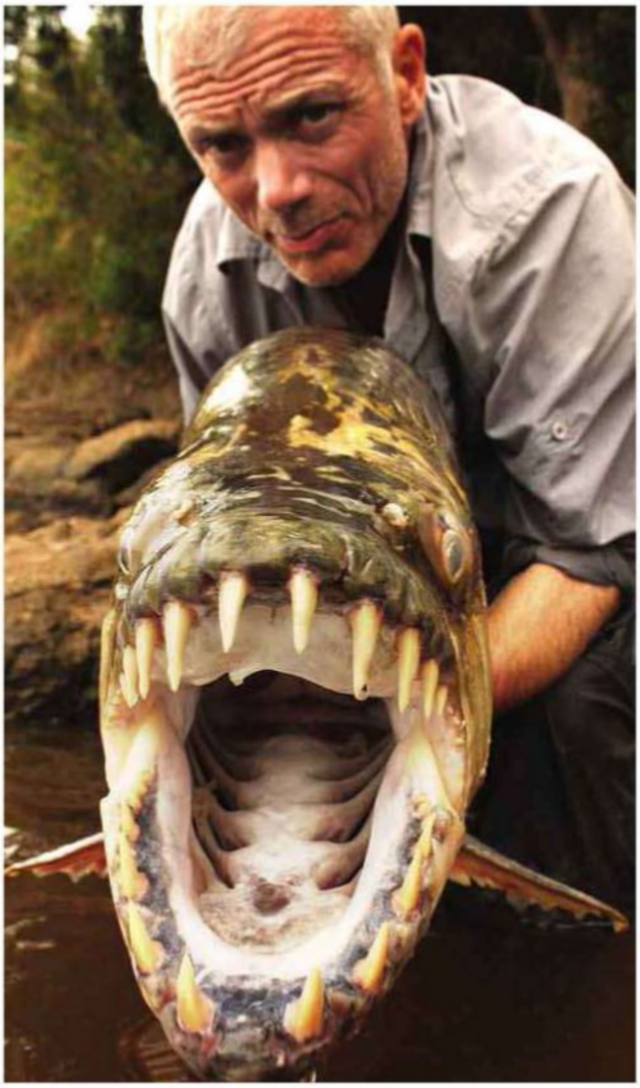
DRUNKEN OWL

A woman walking her dog in Pforzheim, southwestern Germany, alerted the police after seeing a brown owl sitting by the side of the road oblivious to passing traffic. It didn't appear to be injured, but one eyelid was drooping. The police found two little empty bottles of Schnapps nearby and concluded that the bird was paralytically drunk. They took it into custody and gave it lots of water until it sobered up. *Der Spiegel, 18 Jan 2011.*

WONDERS OF THE WATERS



BNPS.CO.UK / GRAHAM EDKINS



BNPS.CO.UK / JEREMY WADE

FLYING SQUID

The above photograph, taken south of Japan, shows squid using "jet propulsion" to leap out of the sea. The molluscs swim in shoals and can soar for up to 65ft (20m) when they are under threat from predators. The display was captured by Graham Edkins, 60, a retired teacher from Boreham, Essex. "They sensed danger from the bow wave of the boat and their defence mechanism is to leap out of the water," he said. *Metro, Sun, 14 Dec 2010.*

FRESHWATER MONSTER

This fish is so fierce it could eat a crocodile for lunch. Jeremy Wade, 52, caught the goliath tigerfish (*Hydrocynus goliath*) in a remote stretch of the Congo River. It was 5ft (1.5m) long and weighed 100lb (45kg). "It is, for all intents and purposes, a giant piranha," said Mr Wade, from Bath, Somerset. "It is quite a beast. The [32] teeth on it are incredibly sharp and are about the same length [2in/5cm] as those of a great white shark. It also has an extremely powerful bite and has been known to consume prey the same size as itself, attack people and take pieces out of crocodiles. It is very rare to catch one, especially by an outsider, because they are found in such a remote and difficult location. There are no guides or lodges on that part of the river." He used a large catfish as bait and a line with a 200lb (90kg) breaking strain. He spent eight days trying to catch the fish and returned it to the river afterwards. *Metro, D.Mail, Sun, 21 Oct 2010.*

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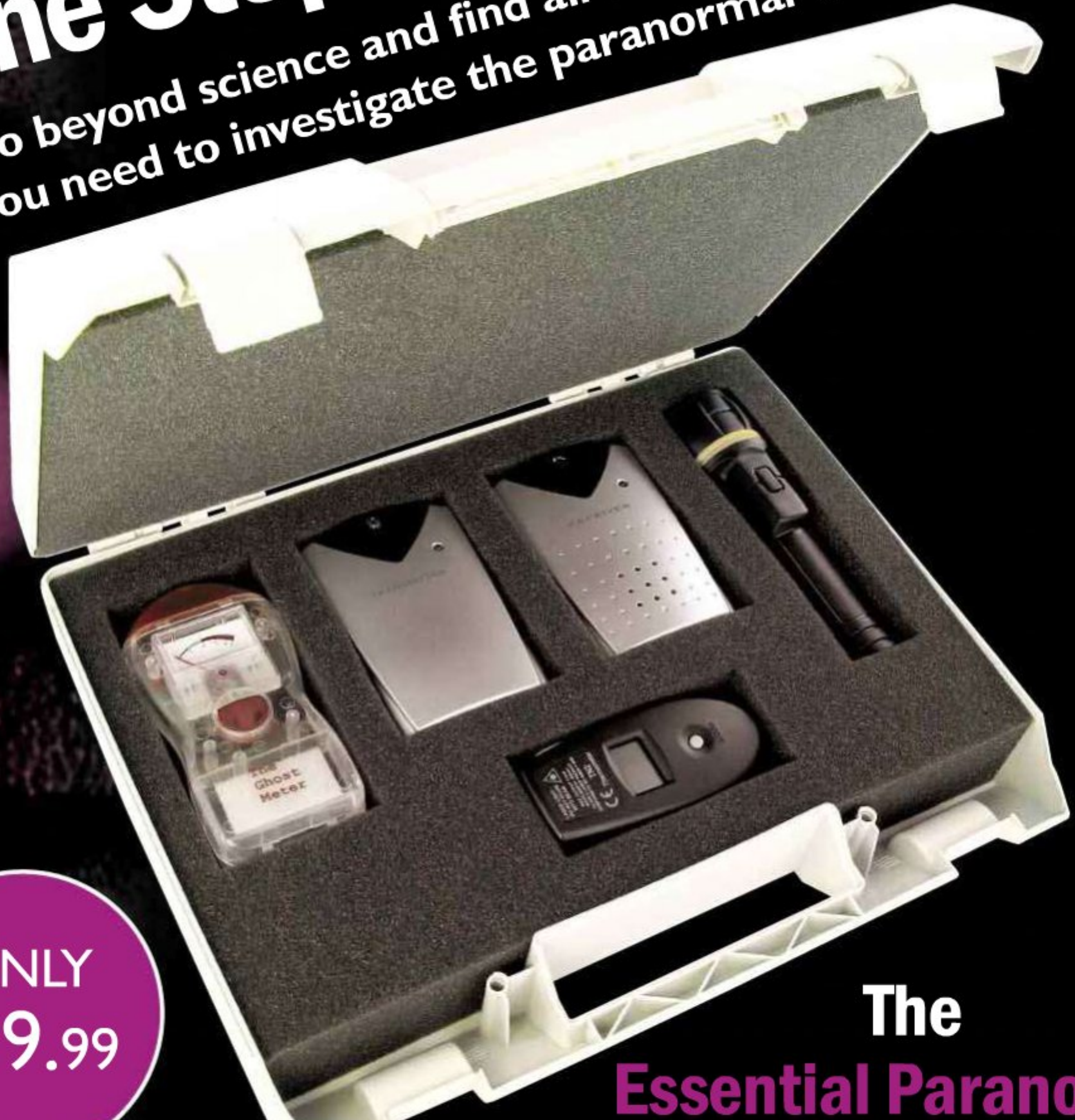

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MATT PATTINSON

VICTORIAN VESTIGES

One prominent defender of Darwin's theories cited the existence of "evolutionary leftovers", but, as **DAVID HAMBLING** explains, many had useful functions after all.

In 1893, the German anatomist Robert Wiedersheim published his celebrated book *The Structure of Man: an Index to his Past History*.[1] This described 86 vestigial structures (sometimes inaccurately called organs) that are effectively useless evolutionary leftovers, remnants of earlier stages of development. This apparently solid piece of 19th-century scholarship gave a boost to Darwin's contested theory of evolution, helping to open the way for a new era in biology. Looking back on it now, we might see things a bit differently.

Darwin documented a few vestigial organs in *The Descent Of Man*, but Wiedersheim delved into every corner of anatomy. Subsequent research has shown that some of those 'useless' organs are rather important, while others remain more mysterious.

Wiedersheim's list includes the pineal gland, a body the shape of a pinecone and the size of a grain of rice sitting between the brain's two hemispheres. It has been a subject of interest since ancient times. In the 17th century, René Descartes had echoed Greek philosophers in claiming the pineal gland was the seat of the soul. To spiritualists, it's the mystic 'third eye', being connected to a rudimentary third eye in some lizards. While it's tempting to think that Wiedersheim put the pineal on the list as a comment on the redundancy of the soul, it's just that anatomists had not discovered its role in producing melatonin, regulating our sleeping and waking cycles.

More seriously, Wiedersheim thought the pituitary gland, a pea-sized protrusion at the base of the brain, was a useless vestige. In fact, it's essential, secreting hormones controlling growth and blood pressure. It's also the body's thermostat and central water regulator, the control system for the kidneys – not to mention its role in reproduction, regulating everything from sexual desire (pituitary damage will destroy the libido) to contractions in childbirth.

Scientists now understand the pineal and pituitary, but they're still arguing about the vomeronasal organ, also known as Jacobson's organ. Another of Wiedersheim's vestiges, it's located in the base of the nasal cavity. Some surgeons claim that it doesn't really exist in humans at all, just the space where it would be. Others insist that they have found vomeronasal organs in many patients.

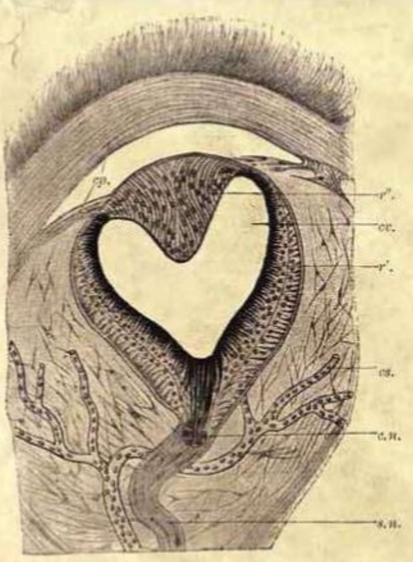

FIG. 85.—LONGITUDINAL SECTION THROUGH THE PINEAL ORGAN OF A REPTILE (*Hatteria punctata*). (Slightly magnified.) (After Baldwin Spencer.)
cp., connective tissue capsule; *r''.*, "lens"; *cc.*, cavity of the organ filled with fluid; *r'.*, retina-like portion of the vesicle; *vs.*, blood-vessels; *c.n.*, cells in the nerve stalk (*s.n.*).

In animals, the vomeronasal organ detects pheromones, hormonal chemical signals passed between individuals. There is evidence that human ovulation is influenced by pheromones,[2] but other signals are questionable. There are a host of perfume manufactures selling products that claim to contain human sex attractants; keying in "pheromone" and "aftershave" into Google yields 418,000 hits. Needless to say, these are unproven. There is also some evidence for a human fear pheromone, nicknamed "the smell of fear".

Such pheromones may exist even if there is no vomeronasal organ, as researchers have found that it may be possible to pick up pheromones with our normal sense of smell. The field remains a lively one.

Many of the structures called "useless" were simply not yet understood

The appendix is the most famous vestigial organ, a worm-like pouch off the intestines. It clearly does not perform the function that it does in herbivorous animals, which have a large appendix full of symbiotic bacteria that digest the cellulose in plant matter. However, the human appendix does also host a rich variety of friendly bacteria, and if the bacterial population of the gut is lost due to illness, it is re-colonised from the appendix. The appendix has also proved to be a source of disease-fighting lymphoid cells, suggesting that it plays a part in the immune system.

The appendix is not as vital as the pituitary, and people can survive without it – at least in the developed world. These days our food is relatively safe, and modern plumbing means that contamination with fæcal matter is rare. A few centuries ago, lacking an appendix might well have shortened your life.

LEFT: The pineal gland.
BELOW: Robert Wiedersheim argued in favour of evolution, but with an incomplete knowledge of physiology.

The appendix is an example of an organ that is no longer performing the main function it evolved for and has been adapted to other purposes. The same might be said of the coccyx or tailbone, a set of three to five fused vertebræ, also listed by Wiedersheim as vestigial. In other animals, the coccyx is the starting point of the tail; in humans it anchors a number of important muscles and tendons. Without a coccyx, we would have trouble sitting upright, not to mention defecating. Not exactly useless then.

Some features have remained unchallenged. Darwin's Tubercle is a small lump of cartilage on the fold of the outer ear. It's a remnant of a more complex structure in earlier primates, a genuinely useless vestige. And there were also plenty of new additions to the original list. (Nipples on men are not classed as vestigial, having never been functional; but their evolutionary cost is so low they have never disappeared.)

Wiedersheim's work helped win the argument for evolution, as his extensive list of vestigial organs was hard to account for in the Creationist scheme. But in hindsight it might be seen more as a catalogue of things that Victorian anatomists didn't understand, and therefore *assumed* were useless – in many cases, wrongly.

It's worth noting that the same discussion is taking place over what was initially labelled "junk DNA" in the human genome. Although it appeared functionless at first, this is now called "non-coding DNA" and turns out to have a role that is still being uncovered. Things out there – or rather, in here – are much stranger than we might initially guess.

NOTES

[1] Full English translation: http://bit.ly/hTHrSt (archive.org).

[2] *Nature*: http://bit.ly/f4Z3fQ (nature.com).

PINEAL GLAND ILLUSTRATION FROM *THE STRUCTURE OF MAN: AN INDEX TO HIS PAST HISTORY*

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FAMILY TIES THAT BIND...

AT LEAST YOU KNOW YOU CAN ALWAYS TRUST YOUR OWN KIN... OR CAN YOU?

GETTY IMAGES / AFP / CONGTROLUCE

GETTY IMAGES / AFP

ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT: The rooms where Maria Monaco was held captive by her family for 18 years.

LEFT: Michele Mongelli's wife protests against accusations of imprisonment.

The notorious case of Josef Fritzl, arrested in April 2008 for imprisoning his daughter in an Austrian cellar for 24 years and fathering her seven children, is well known; but being locked up by one's relations occurs all over the world, as these sorry tales attest.

- Joao Batista Groppo, 64, from Sorocaba, Brazil, locked his wife in the family cellar for 16 (or possibly only eight) years with no light, while he moved his mistress in upstairs. He was arrested after a neighbour heard sobbing coming from beneath his house. Police found his 64-year-old wife Sebastiana lying naked on a concrete bed. "It was horrifying," said policewoman Jaqueline Coutinho. "There were dogs and animals free in the back yard while the old woman was locked in the cellar with bars and padlocks." Groppo and his mistress, Maria Furquim, faced up to eight years in jail. He said he had locked up his wife because she was mentally ill and aggressive, and he didn't want to waste electricity by having lights in the cellar, which was less than 12ft (3.6m) square. It had no ventilation and no lavatory, and the floor was covered in filth and cockroaches. Sebastiana was locked up by her husband of 40 years in 1995. The couple had a son who was killed in an accident. The dazed wife was taken to hospital and released into the care of relatives.

REX FEATURES

Maria Monaco was locked up for being an unmarried mum

About a week later, Brazilian police freed a 45-year-old woman who had been locked in a house in Mariluz, Paraná state, for 20 years by her 60-year-old partner. She was prohibited from any communication with the outside world and had to perform household chores. *BBC News, 27 Jan; Sun, 29 Jan; www.antaranews.com, 5 Feb 2011*.

- Iris Edelmann, 49, imprisoned Elsa Koenig, her 96-year-old grandmother, in a pitch-dark room with no electricity for three years. She sealed the windows with heavy felt, foil and masking tape. At her trial in Leipzig in January this year, the prosecutor said: "She did all this to get the 600-odd euros a month that her grandmother was entitled to." The room had a lavatory, and Edelmann took food to her dementia-stricken grandmother. She was freed after neighbours heard cries in 2008, but died the following year. *D.Telegraph, Sun, 6 Jan 2011*.

- Drago Jagic was born slightly retarded and his embarrassed parents kept him hidden inside their home in Beli Manastir, eastern Croatia, building a high wall to kept their secret son hidden from prying eyes. For the next 60 years, neighbours and relatives didn't even know he existed until his 87-year-old mother Veronica died in 2007, when local services visited the house. They said that Jagic would remain at home, but would be taken out regularly by social workers to see the outside world. *(Dublin) Metro, 23 May 2007*.

- A woman held prisoner by her family for 18 years for having a baby out of wedlock was freed by Italian police on 13 June 2008. Maria Monaco, 47, was found huddled in the corner of her prison cell bedroom, surrounded by filth and excrement, in Santa Maria Capua Vetere, a small town just outside Naples, after an anonymous tip-off. Her mother Anna Rosa Golino, 80, her brother Prisco, 44, and her sister Michelina, 54, were arrested. Police were also questioning her 17-year-old son who was living with his grandmother and was said to be "fully aware of the situation" (*D.Mail, D.Mirror, 14 June 2008*), or "did not know about his mother" (*Shropshire Star, 14 June; Dublin Metro, 16 June 2008*).

- A Swedish woman with multiple sclerosis was held captive by her common law husband for nine years. The unnamed woman, aged 68 or "in her 50s", weighed less than six stone (38kg) when she was freed from the 12ft (3.6m) square cabin at a campsite near Eksjö in the southern region of Småland. Her partner, aged 58 or "in his 60s", was arrested. *BBC News, 5 Sept; Sunday Mirror, Independent on Sunday, 7 Sept 2008.*

- An Italian man kept his wife prisoner for 50 years in their house in Val di Non near Trento. The wife, in her 70s at the time of the report, said she was allowed to leave home only when he accompanied her. He banned her from watching TV or seeing their two grown-up children. He beat her and locked all doors and windows whenever he went out. The woman's ordeal – which began the day they were married in 1958 – became known when she was admitted to hospital with heart trouble. *Metro, 9 Oct 2008.*

- A girl was held captive at home in the northern Japanese city of Sapporo for eight years by her mother after the authorities ignored her being taken out of school. The girl was locked away in 1998, when she was 11, and held until 2006, when a neighbour heard yelling and thumping coming from the house and alerted police. She was found sitting against a bedroom wall, unable to talk or stand, despite having no obvious injuries. At the time of the report, the victim, by then aged 21, had lost all memory of her confinement and had the reading ability of a six-year-old. Her mother was diagnosed with schizophrenia and hospitalised. Her father separated from his wife in 2004. *[AP] 31 Oct 2008.*

- Two women in their early 20s were held captive for 10 years by their half-brother in the southern Saudi city of Jazan before being freed by the Saudi National Association for Human Rights following an anonymous tip. Responsibility for the girls fell to their half-brother after their mother abandoned them. He put the pair in a room with a lavatory and fed them through a small opening. *MX News, 14 Jan 2009.*

- Marius G, a retired Polish railway employee, and his wife, a geography teacher, kept their daughter Ludmilla, 33, locked in a wardrobe for 13 years. She had allegedly shown symptoms of mental illness in the year of her final exams and her parents had locked her up rather than seek psychiatric treatment. When the police found her, she couldn't speak, understood only simple instructions, and could swallow only liquid. *Superexpress (Romania), 21 June 2008.*

- Alicja B, 21, was held captive and repeatedly raped for six years by her father Krysztof, 45. She was kept tied up in a locked room with no door handles, and bore him two sons, in 2005 and 2007. He forced her to give them up for adoption. He was detained on 5 September 2008 in the eastern Polish city of Siedlce. *[AP,R] 9 Sept 2008.*

- Michele (or Michelle) Mongelli, 64 (or 63), kept his daughter prisoner and raped her regularly for 25 years. He groomed his son Giuseppe to abuse her too. Both men were arrested in Turin, Italy, on 27 March 2009. The 34-year-old victim, named "Laura" by the Italian media, was first abused at the age of nine, and was held in a room with no electricity. She was occasionally allowed outside, but only in the company of her father. In 1994, she escaped and raised the alarm, but Mongelli – a scrap metal dealer – convinced police she was "disturbed" and she was returned to his care. *Sun, D.Mirror, 28 Mar 2009.*

Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

140. BALD QUEEN BESS

HUNT EMERSON

The myth

Queen Elizabeth I was bald at the age of thirty.

The "truth"

When I was at school, we were taught that Elizabeth went bald because she used arsenic-based make-up. Today, the more common story is that a bad case of smallpox left her hairless. Either way, there seems no reason to believe that she actually was slap-headed, either as a young woman or an old one, other than the fact that she wore wigs – which were, after all, common enough in the fashions of her time. A lock of greying hair, supposedly the queen's, and dated to either 1572 or 1582, is still extant at Wilton House near Salisbury. There are contemporary references to her hair as late as 1599, when she was in her mid-sixties. Liz biographer Elizabeth Jenkins dates the baldness story to a mistaken belief, by a writer in the 1920s, that no portrait of the queen after 1564 showed her with hair; by 1931, this had become Hilaire Belloc's unadorned and unsupported statement, in an edition of his *History of England*, that "At thirty she was as bald as an egg."

Sources

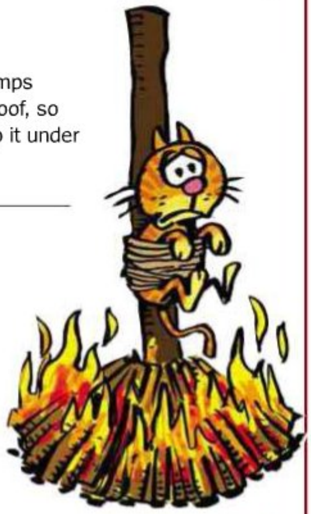
Elizabeth Jenkins: *Elizabeth the Great*, Artus Books, 2001; http://s.coop/lizmyths; http://s.coop/victoriaandalbert; http://s.coop/bbcliz.

Disclaimer

Neither the hirsute nor the shiny-pated camps appear to be in possession of absolute proof, so if you have evidence either way, don't keep it under your hat – send it to *FT*'s letters page.

Mythchaser

It is sometimes said that the impact of the Black Death was worsened because, in the years before it struck, Christian witch-hunters had systematically wiped out Europe's population of cats, fearing them to be in league with the devil, and this allowed rats to thrive. Does this belief have any grounding at all in science, history, or even theology?



FOR MORE MYTHCONCEPTIONS, GO TO:

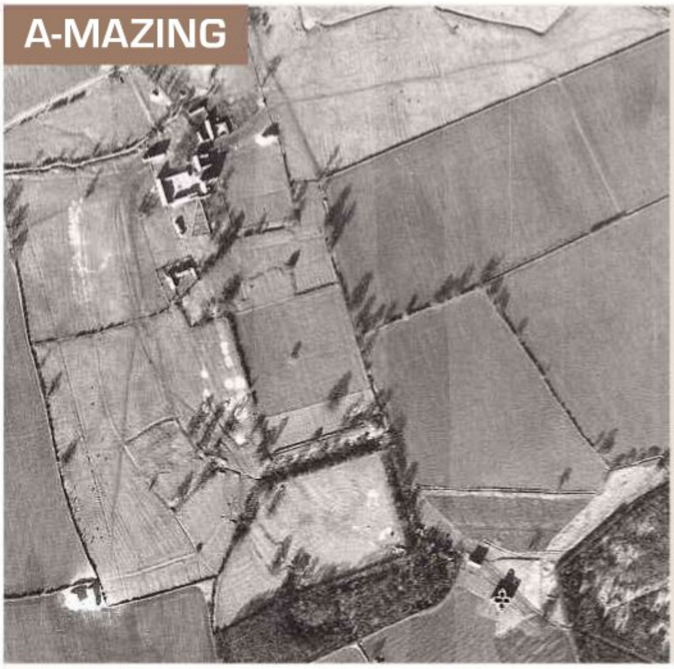
www.forteantimes.com/strangedays/mythbusters

MATT PATTINSON

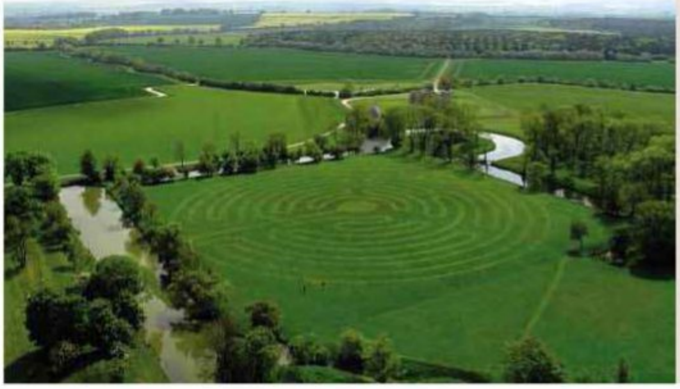
ARCHÆOLOGY

Our archæological round-up is brought to you by **PAUL DEVEREUX**, a founding co-editor of the peer-review *Time and Mind: The Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture* (www.bergpublishers.com).

A-MAZING



NATIONAL TRUST



NATIONAL TRUST

A-MAZING

Lyveden New Bield, near Oundle, Northamptonshire, consists of a recently recovered Tudor garden, one of the oldest garden landscapes in England, an unfinished Summer Lodge (the "New Bield"), and many other original features. Now owned by the National Trust (NT), the garden was built in the 1600s by Sir Thomas Tresham, a notable Catholic of his day whose son was implicated in the 1605 abortive Gunpowder Plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament. He was obliged to leave the garden and lodge project incomplete.

A surprising element of the grounds was brought to light in a bizarre manner in the late 1990s during the NT's recovery and restoration work. Examination of grass markings inadvertently captured on a World War II Luftwaffe aerial spy photograph revealed the faint traces of a 10-ring labyrinth, some 120m (395ft) across, its twisting and turning path a mile (1.6km) in length. Due to its size, Tresham had observation mounds built for it to be seen properly. The garden (and especially the lodge) is replete with Catholic Christian symbolism, and the labyrinth was originally marked out with 400 raspberry and rose bushes – the raspberries symbolising the passion of Christ, and the white roses the Virgin Mary.

The NT has mown the labyrinth pattern to make it more visible, though it is still a subtle feature, and when *FT* visited Lyveden recently a geophysical survey was being commenced ahead of full restoration to ascertain if its path had originally been structured or simply mown. *Guardian, 6 Nov 2010, and current information from the National Trust.*

ABOVE LEFT AND DETAIL: Wartime German aerial photo showing Tresham's Summer Lodge and garden, and the presence of an elaborate maze.

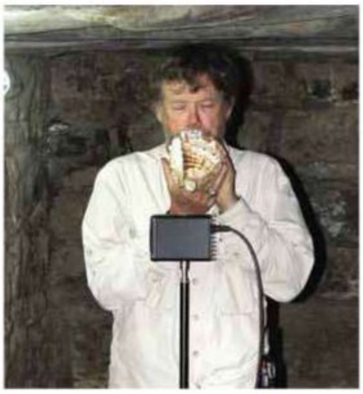
LEFT: The maze as it is today.

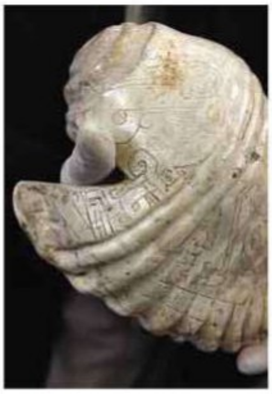
LISTENING IN ON ANCIENT AMERICA

There has been some interesting research of late into the acoustics of ancient American sacred sites. In northern Peru, especially, there have been some notable findings made by Stanford University researchers at the 3,000-year-old pilgrimage centre of Chavín de Huántar. In 2001, Stanford archæologists discovered 20 intact conch shells buried in the dirt floor surfaces of the underground passageways or galleries that form the interior of the mysterious temple. Conch shells can be played like wind instruments, producing a range of powerful sounds ("like an animal, or the wind, or a whisper" as one researcher put it). Chavín iconography confirms their importance, though their exact function remains unknown. They are engraved with designs, not all of which are Chavín style, and seem to have been patterned at various stops on their journey through the Andes from the ocean to Chavín.

Currently, Stanford researchers are trying to understand what the conches would have sounded like in the unusual environment created by the labyrinthine stone-walled subterranean architecture. One of the team, anthropologist John Rick, points out that there is clear evidence of the Chavín priests and architects manipulating light and acoustic spaces "where it seems that they were playing around with sound" and that they were using psychoactive drugs. "But what other

JOSÉ LUIS CRUZADO CORONEL





JYRI HUOPANIEMI

ABOVE LEFT: Perry Cook plays a conch shell within an underground passageway at Chavín de Huántar.

ABOVE RIGHT: The conches were engraved with elaborate patterns, contemporary with Chavín culture, but not made by the Chavín people. Apparently, the shells had stopped at other sites in the central Andes, in their journey from the sea, and were converted to trumpets *en route*. The Chavín touch was the characteristic V-shaped notch carved into the opening of the shell, which allows for bendable notes. It also possibly enabled priests in the procession to see where they were walking as they blew into the shells.

effects were they using in this very early multimedia show, and why?" he asks. "Was it a kind of mind control using sensory manipulation exercised by the priestly elite?" He points out that the voice of a person talking while walking through the galleries seems to change, and echoes are multiplied and bounce back so rapidly so as to appear to emanate from every direction at once.

The interdisciplinary team has been exploring the acoustic environment of the place using arrays of flexible microphones, amplifiers, computers and other electronic equipment in order to determine how auditory perception is affected inside the temple, which in turn can provide clues about the site's purpose. Participants listened *in situ* to "sounds that could have been authentic in Chavín times" and reported their experiences. Perceptual, psychological and even physiological effects have been noted. *Stanford University News, 7 Feb 2011*.

There have been many claims (some controversial) that the ancient Maya employed acoustic effects in their ceremonial cities in Mexico and Central America. (The most famous of these is the chirp-like echo from the Castillo in Chichén Itzá that sounds like the primary call of the quetzal bird, which was sacred to the Maya.) The latest claim comes from an archæological team from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, led by Francisca Zalaquett. It has found that the 1,400-year-old "Northern Group" of temples and public spaces at Palenque is especially good at projecting the human voice and sounds from musical instruments found at the site.

Zalaquett argues that musicians and priests may have stood on top of these temples or in specialised projection rooms (which still exist), to broadcast songs and chants throughout the squares. They would have been clearly heard 100m (330ft) away, the team discovered, a "public address system" effect caused by the placing and configuration of the buildings in the Northern Group, enhanced by the application of stucco wall coatings. "We think there was an intentionality of the builders to use and modify its architecture for acoustic purposes," Zalaquett states. *National Geographic Daily News, 16 Dec 2010*.

CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

136. DUPE-LICITY: ANCIENT LITERARY LAPSES

(Titular honours shared between Julia Roberts and Stephen Leacock. For a larger repertoire, see Joseph Rosenblum: *Practice to Deceive: The Amazing Stories of Literary Forgery's Most Notorious Practitioners*, Oak Knoll Press, Delaware, 2000; also Melissa Katsoulis: *Telling Tales: A History of Literary Hoaxes*, Constable, 2009.)

"I can draw no line between imposture and self-deception" – Fort, *Books*, p670, apropos fraudulent claims (1924) to have discovered the lost books of Livy's *History*, updated **FT135:24**.

Reflecting upon early records, Thucydides (*History*, bk1 ch13) warned against their easy fraudulence. On another side of the coin, Quintilian (*Institutes of Oratory*, bk1 ch8) quipped that it was hard to argue against books that had never existed.

Thucydides himself may have been a victim. His Byzantine biographer Marcellinus (para43) says the final book eight of his *History* was concocted either by his daughter or his successor Xenophon, ruling out the former because a woman was incapable of such a thing – don't doorstep me, feminists, I'm only the messenger.

Diogenes Lærtius (*Lives of the Philosophers*, bk5 para92) says Dionysius 'The Renegade' composed a tragedy, *Parthenopæus*, passing it off as by Sophocles. When the philosopher Heraclides fell for this, Dionysius directed him to the verses "An aged monkey is not easily caught; / He's caught indeed, but only after a time," adding "Heraclides knows nothing of letters, and has no shame." cf. Jim Schnabel: "Puck in the Laboratory: The Construction and Deconstruction of Hoaxlike Deceptions in Science", *Science, Technology & Human Values*, 19, 1994, pp459–92.

This prefigures the trick played by Bevis Hillier on rival Betjeman biographer AN Wilson, sending him a fake letter from 'Eve de Harben' (anagram for 'Ever Been Had'), containing the acrostic "AN Wilson is a shit."

Politics as well as personalities played a part. His biographer Plutarch (ch10 para2) says Solon inserted verses into *The Iliad* to enhance Athens's early history. X the Unknown knocked out fake diaries (remember the Hitler ones that took in Trevor-Roper?) of Alexander the Great to prove him a drunk. The *Donation of Constantine* (eighth-century) were invented to justify papal earthly authority.

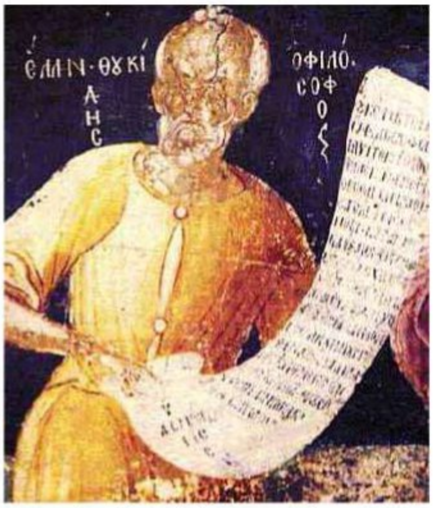
A diary of the Trojan War by 'Dictys the Cretan', supposedly found in Nero's time, took in some later readers, as did its counterpart by 'Dares the Phrygian'. Many Byzantines swallowed the theological treatises purporting to be by the New Testament character, Dionysius the Areopagite.

The *Augustan History*, ostensibly a collection of post-Suetonian imperial biographies by six otherwise unknown writers under Diocletian and Constantine, is now widely regarded as the work of a late fourth-century single 'rogue grammarian' (Ronald Syme, author of sundry books and articles thereon).

No shortage of gullible takers. Lucian (*Against the Ignorant Bibliophile*, para4) mocks his victim for this, while his contemporary Galen had to write a pamphlet *On His Own Books* to separate literary wheat from chaff, having stumbled on forgeries being flogged in the Sandalarium (Rome's Charing Cross Road).

Innumerable other examples could be adduced (see Katsoulis and Rosenblum above, also Anthony Grafton: *Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Deception in Western Scholarship*, Princeton UP, 1990). For easy examples, the 17th-century Nodot fake Petronius fragment, the Ossian business involving Samuel Johnson, Clifford Irving's 'biography' of Howard Hughes, the Hitler Diaries – like Mrs Thatcher, I want to go on and on…

Of course, if we believe John Ross's *Tacitus and Bracchiolini: The Annals Forged in the XVth Century* (London, 1878; cf. 'G.G': *The Edinburgh Review*, 148, 1878, pp437–69), followed by the French Hochart (1890) and the German Weiner (1920), not to mention Jean Hardouin's 1685 contention that virtually all Greek and Latin literature was forged by mediæval Benedictines, then we are left with little except what the Germans so nicely call 'Schwindelliteratur'.



ABOVE: Thucydides, who both warned about and was possibly a posthumous victim of fraud.

FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS

FURTHER DETAILS ON STORIES PREVIOUSLY REPORTED IN *FT*

BRISTOL EVENING POST / CLARE GREEN

ABANDONED FOOTWEAR [FT211:21]

Every few years, in a spot called Weavern Woods between Slaughterford and Corsham in Wiltshire, ramblers have found pairs of new footwear nailed to the ground or to fallen trees. It could be an in-joke or a long-term piece of installation art. It began, apparently, in the 1980s when a pair of high-heeled stilettos was fastened to a tree. Whoever did it intended the shoes to stay there: they were bolted to a metal bar and then screwed into one of the tree roots on the path. There were even washers on the bolts to hinder them being unscrewed. Over the years, just as one pair of shoes start to rot away, another pair appears, including knee-high pink boots, then white stilettos and most recently a pair of men's brogues (above).

"The word is that it's an artist doing some kind of modern art and the art is people's reaction to it," said a Corsham resident, who declined to be named. "People have got no idea but we'll probably see some art exhibition explaining it all in a few years' time. Or maybe it's just tradition now and it's different people doing it. It started a year after there was a murder here many years ago, and people did think it was linked to that back then, but no one thinks that now, it's gone on too long." *Western Daily Press, 10 Feb 2010.*

NEVERMORE? [FT260:16]

Once again, the mysterious visitor known as the Poe Toaster, who has left three roses and a half-empty bottle of Martell cognac at the grave of Edgar Allan Poe (1809–49) in Baltimore, Maryland, every year on the writer's birthday, failed to show on 19 January, seemingly ending a ritual that began more than 60 years ago. Telltale hearts beat with anticipation during a rainy, midnight dreary and beyond, but they were disappointed. Four people turned up claiming to be the Toaster, but they were exposed as fakes by Jeff Jerome, the curator of the Poe House and Museum, who has seen every visit since 1977. One pretender emerged from a white stretch limo shortly after midnight, two others appeared to be women, and the fourth was an older man. All walked in clear sight of the Poe fans, contrary to the secretive nature of the real Toaster. All wore black hats and left roses and cognac, and two left notes, but none gave the secret signal that only Jerome says he knows, and none arranged the roses in the unique pattern established by the Toaster over the decades. Jerome declared the vigil over at 5am. "I will be here in 2012, but that will be it," he said. "If he's a no-show, I will officially pronounce the tradition dead." *[AP] 19 Jan; D.Telegraph, 20 Jan 2011.*

ROMANIA'S WITCHES [FT272:22]

A month after Romanian authorities began taxing soothsayers and fortune-tellers for their trade, they were cursing a new bill that threatened fines or even jail if their predictions didn't come true. "They can't condemn witches, they should condemn the cards," said Queen Witch Bratara Buzea. The latest bill was passed in the Senate in early February, but had still to be approved by a financial and labour committee and by the Chamber of Deputies, the other house of parliament. "I will fight until my last breath for this not to be passed," said Bratara. Sometimes, she argued, people don't provide their real identities, dates of birth or other personal details, which could skew a seer's predictions. "What about when the client gives false details about themselves? We can't be blamed for that." The new bill would also require witches to have a permit, to provide their customers with receipts and bar them from practising near schools and churches. *[AP] 8 Feb 2011.*

DOG MOCKED HITLER [FT272:23]

When Jackie, a Dalmatian dog belonging to the Finnish businessman Tor Borg, gave the Nazi salute during the Third Reich, this was seen as an insult to Hitler; a similar stunt today is regarded as politically incorrect and in extreme bad taste. A German Shepherd called Goldie was trained to raise his right paw for a two-part television drama broadcast in February about the Hindenburg airship disaster in 1937. Goldie played the devoted pet of a cabaret artist opposed to the Nazis, played by Hannes Jaenicke. "Goldie is a professional film dog and has learned many things in his time," said Mr Jaenicke. "It was my idea to get him to raise his paw in the Hitler salute. He got a biscuit each time he did it and an animal welfare specialist was on hand throughout."

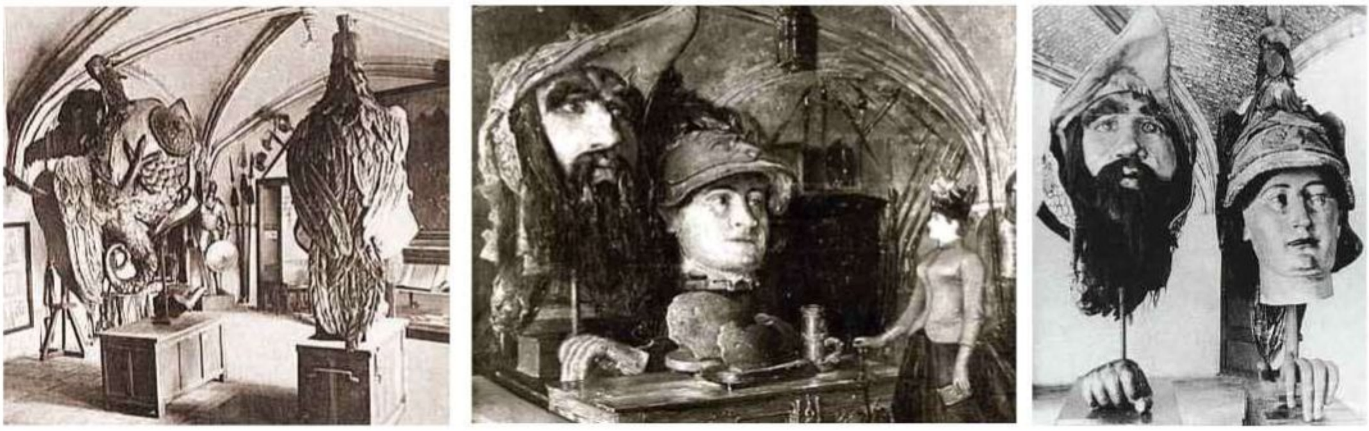
Context, of course, is crucial. Several years ago in Berlin, a neo-Nazi pensioner was jailed for teaching his German Shepherd Adolf to give the Nazi salute outside schools where high numbers of immigrant pupils were being taught. Adolf was given away to a family with no radical political affiliations. *D.Mail, 1 Feb 2011.*

AFLOCKALYPSE NOW! [FT272:4–5]

Several incidents in the wave of bird and fish deaths around the world in January remain enigmatic, but the death of 200 starlings that dropped from the sky in Yankton, South Dakota, on 17 January has been explained. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) said that it had poisoned the birds. Some 5,000 had been "terrorising" a feedlot 10 miles (16km) away across the state line in Nebraska, defecating in the feed meal and posing a threat to the animals and farm workers. Bait was laced with the poison DRC-1339. Officials were surprised the birds made it so far before dying. The cull drew attention to a little-known government programme that began in the 1960s named with droll humour "Bye Bye Blackbird", which eventually became part of the USDA. In 2009, USDA agents poisoned more than four million red-winged blackbirds, starlings, cowbirds and grackles. *Christian Science Monitor, 20 Jan; D.Mail, 22 Jan 2011.*

A^Z ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the cryptozoological garden, revealing the answer to his enquiry on a strange postcard, plus a report of a monster owl.



ABOVE LEFT: The postcard that started the investigation. **ABOVE CENTRE AND RIGHT:** The front view of the parade costume heads revealed. **BELOW:** A snowy owl.

COURTESY LAURENT DUBUISSON/MUSÉE DES GÉANTS, ATH

GETTING AHEAD WITH THE GIANT HELMETS MYSTERY

In the January issue, I requested information about two very ornate and quite enormous helmets on display in an unnamed museum or gallery as depicted on an old picture postcard, which referred to them only as 'Helmets of the Giants' [**FT270:69**].

Readers of my blog proposed various leads. Richard Freeman thought the helmets might have a link to Horace Walpole's book *The Castle of Otranto*, in which Prince Conrad is killed by a giant helmet that falls from the sky, while Lars Thomas explained: "Legend has it that Alexander the Great always left giant helmets and weapons behind when he had conquered new territory, to scare any potential enemies. I seem to remember reading somewhere that some early museums exhibited some of these giant Alexandrian helmets."

Doug Skinner suggested that the helmets could be linked to the annual "ducasse" in Ath, Belgium, or some other local procession of giants. David and Goliath are popular figures in the tradition.

The mystery was finally solved by *FT*'s art director, Etienne Gilfillan. He contacted Micheline Ruyssinck, a curator at Belgium's Royal Museum of Art and History, who in turn sent details to Laurent Dubuisson, curator of the Museum of the Giants in the city of Ath, which houses various huge figures and other exhibits that have been created for folklore-inspired festival processions in Belgium. And, sure enough, he knew all about them. It turns out that the postcard depicts the backs of two extremely large, helmeted, manufactured heads that represent a pair of traditional Antwerp giants – Druon Antigonus and Pallas Athena. Laurent sent a photograph (above) depicting them from the front and wearing the helmets shown on my postcard. These very elaborate heads featured each year in Antwerp's annual Ommegang (purification) festival's procession until 1872, when they were replaced by some new heads and were then stored in the Steen, a castle now housing Belgium's Navy Museum. They were later transferred to Antwerp's Museum of Ethnology, where they were placed on display. Following some restoration work to recreate their former glory, in 2001 Laurent saw the heads there himself, and in 2002 his Museum of the Giants hosted an exhibition devoted to them. These spectacular heads are currently in the collections of Antwerp's new Museum aan de Stroom (MAS), due to open in May 2011. *Laurent Dubuisson via Micheline Ruyssinck via Etienne Gilfillan, pers. comm., 4 Feb 2011.*

IT'S THE BOOGER OWL!

In my book *Extraordinary Animals Revisited* (2007), I noted that cryptozoologist Nick Sucik had learnt from some Marine Corps recruits of a huge white owl said to inhabit southern Texas and Mexico, and to stand around 4ft (1.2m) tall, i.e. twice as tall as any known owl species alive today. A similar mega-owl has long been reported from Pennsylvania and the Ozarks, where it is called the booger owl or big-hoot. Now, reader John Blas has sent me a detailed account of his own hitherto unpublicised encounter with one such bird in California, and he has kindly permitted me to document it here:

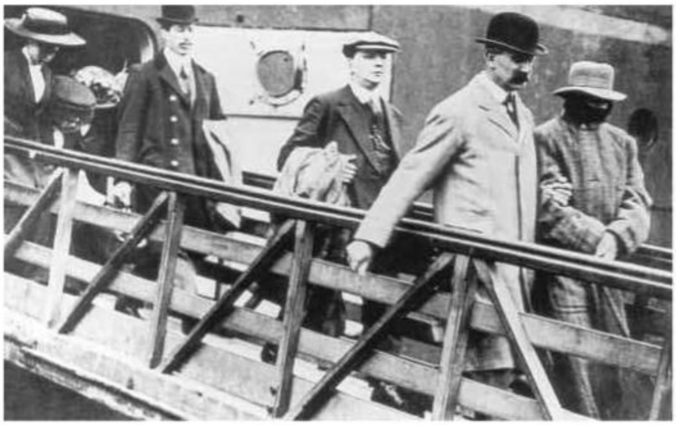
Just finished reading Extraordinary Animals Revisited *and was quite surprised to find out that owls don't get as large as 4 feet tall. I personally saw one in 1973 between Castro Valley, Ca., and Oakland, Ca., on Redwood Road at about midnight in the middle of August. It stood at least 4 feet tall and was solid white; it had a wingspan of at least 9 to 10 feet [2.7–3m]. I could see it very plainly since I had just come around a very sharp curve in the road and my headlights illuminated it very suddenly. I was able to judge the wingspan by the amount of roadway that was covered when it flew off. I was no more than 100 feet [30m] away when I saw it. I also saw it during daylight the very next day from a distance of perhaps 300 yards [275m]. It was very easy to see as it was on a telephone line that stretched across a small valley and the valley floor was foggy during the early morning. This owl was definitely just that, an owl !!! I simply was unaware that they don't get that big. Sorry I didn't let someone know before this.*

As I pointed out in my book, the closest correspondence to these all-white giant owls among confirmed species is with the snowy owl *Nyctea scandiaca*. However, in North America this species is wholly confined to the Arctic tundra (far removed indeed from California, southern Texas and Mexico), it stands no more than 12–14in (30–36cm) tall, and boasts only a very modest wingspan. Conversely, even if we assume that due to the shock of unexpectedly encountering a very striking bird, John Blas may have overestimated its size somewhat, his owl would still be bigger than any known to science, and its white plumage remains unexplained. Yet until he'd read my book John didn't actually realise that owls were not supposed to be that big, so in reality he wouldn't have been too shocked by his sighting anyway. Consequently, John's report provides good reason for believing that there may indeed be a mysterious white owl of exceptional size still awaiting formal identification in the southwestern United States and across the border in Mexico. *John Blas, pers. comm., 28 Feb 2011.*

ADAMANTIOS

Crippen verdict questioned

One of Britain's most infamous hanged murderers may have been set up



LEFT: A detective leads Dr Crippen down the gangplank on his return to Britain.

BELOW: Dr Hawley Harvey Crippen.

GETTY IMAGES / HULTON ARCHIVE

According to the journalist Willliam Le Queux, "Hawley Harvey Crippen was certainly one of the most dangerous criminals of his century." The 1910 murder case was famous for being the first time wireless was used to catch a criminal; and it was also perhaps the first time the press entered upon a murder hunt in the full clamour of startling headlines and graphic details. The trial made the name of Dr Bernard Spilsbury, the celebrated Home Office pathologist and CSI superstar. However, recent forensic research has cast doubt on the guilty verdict.

'Peter' Crippen (as he was known) was an American homeopathic doctor who lived at 39 Hilldrop Crescent, Holloway, north London, with his wife Cora (also American), an unsuccessful music hall singer with a drink problem who openly had affairs. She called herself Belle Elmore – though her real name was Kunigunde Mackamotzki. Mrs Crippen was last seen on 31 January 1910; her husband put it about that she had returned to the US, probably with one of her lovers. The following March, Ethel Le Neve, 27 – Dr Crippen's typist – moved into Hilldrop Crescent and Crippen informed enquirers that his wife had perished of pneumonia "up in the high mountains of California". A friend of Cora told police she suspected foul play; they searched the house, but found nothing. Then Dr Crippen and Ethel disappeared and a renewed search turned up body parts buried in the coal cellar. A warrant was issued for their arrest and eight days later the captain of the *SS Montrose*, heading for Quebec, became suspicious of two of his passengers, a 'Mr Robinson' and 'son', and sent a wireless message to Scotland Yard. The *Montrose* was the first ship to carry Marconi's new radio telegraph technology. Chief Inspector Walter Dew was dispatched on a faster ship bound for Quebec, and arrested the fugitives on the St Lawrence River.

Dr Spilsbury and others had examined the bodily remains and found traces of hyocine, a drug derived from the nightshade family of plants, and a piece of skin said to have an abdominal scar consistent with Cora's medical history. Other evidence presented by the prosecution included a fragment of pyjamas torn from a pair Cora had given her husband and found in association with the body parts, along with curlers and bleached hair consistent with Cora's. The head, bones and limbs were never found. Crippen was tried for murder at the Old Bailey on 18 October, found guilty and hanged on 23 November; Ethel Le Neve was acquitted of being an accessory and lived on until 1967. Crippen went to the gallows protesting his innocence.

Forensic biologists at the University of Michigan have spent three years reviewing the evidence. "The tissue used to convict Dr Crippen was not that of Cora," said David Foran, who compared DNA from that flesh with samples from Mrs Crippen's living relatives, three grandnieces. "Further DNA testing showed the tissue was male… One possibility is that Crippen murdered someone else and those were the remains discovered. Another possibility is that the celebrated investigators planted the evidence." Dr Foran has published his findings, co-authored by poisoning expert John Trestrail, in the *Journal of Forensic Science of America*.

Some have suggested that the police were desperate to secure a conviction after failing to catch Jack the Ripper two decades earlier: Chief Inspector Dew, in charge of the case, was an original member of the police squad searching for the Ripper. Dr Andrew Rose, author of a book about Spilsbury called *Lethal Witness*, has studied seven murder cases in which the pathologist's evidence was key to the prosecution and which Rose believes were miscarriages of justice. "He's got 'form' for responding to police pressure," said Rose. "In [Crippen's] case, he was under enormous pressure to deliver the goods – and he delivered them."

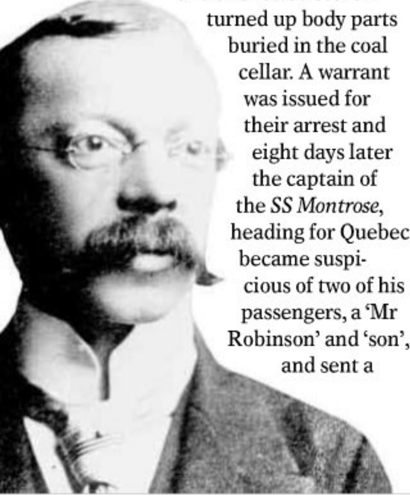
Trestrail has long been concerned about key contradictions in the Crippen affair; for instance, why chop up the victim, dispose of 95 per cent of the body, but leave just enough to get discovered in your own house? Documents in the National Archives not made public at the trial indicate that two weeks before his wife disappeared, a woman matching her description was seen removing trunks from the couple's home. Cora also tried to withdraw the couple's life savings around the same time.

James Patrick Crippen, the doctor's closest living male relative, is demanding a posthumous pardon and wants his remains exhumed from Pentonville Prison and repatriated for burial in the family grave in Coldwater, Michigan. A series of letters allegedly buried in his coffin are said to reveal the "truth" about the body parts in the cellar. It may be that one of his patients died and that he disposed of the body in the way he was accused of disposing of his wife.

In December 2009, the Criminal Cases Review Commission refused to send the case back to the Court of Appeal saying the applicant [James Crippen, 75, the doctor's second cousin three times removed] was not a "properly interested person". However, James Crippen continues to lobby for a pardon. The case is being pushed in Britain by Giovanni di Stefano, a business associate of the late Serbian paramilitary leader Arkan and one of Saddam Hussein's defence team.

Cora never surfaced to stop her husband being hanged, but genealogists tracked a singer named Belle Rose to Cora's sister in New York 10 years after the trial. Was it Cora? *'Encyclopedia of Murder' (1961) by Colin Wilson and Patricia Pitman; Sunday Times, 29 June 2008; Observer, 7 June 2009; BBC News, 7 Dec 2009; Sunday Express, 16 Jan 2011.*

The fugitives were traced aboard ship and arrested



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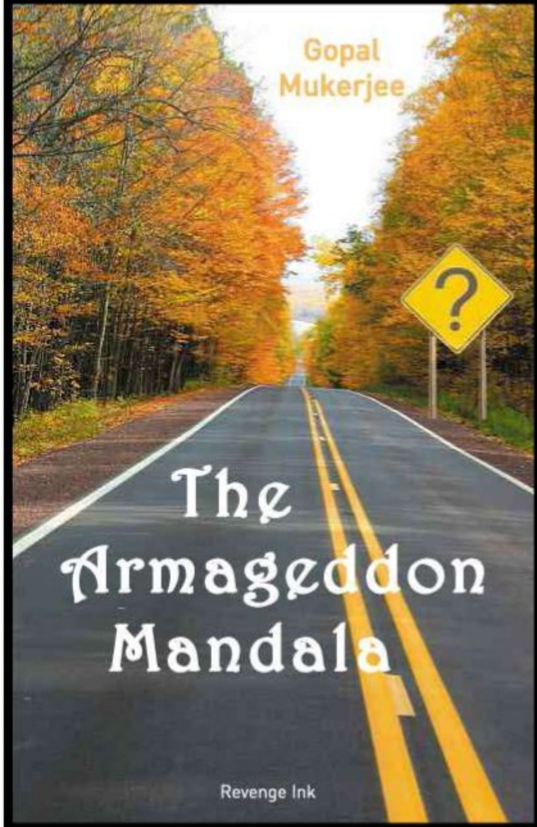

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NECROLOG

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HUGH NICHOLSON

FORTFEST 7
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LEFT: The Gang of Fort mailing out **FT40** in 1983 (Ion at right).

BELOW: At the belated *FT* 10th anniversary party in December 1984.

ION ALEXIS WILL

Ion Alexis Will was a pivotal figure in the history of *Fortean Times*; he inaugurated "fortsorts" (a term he coined to describe the sorting of news clippings into about 50 basic categories) and developed novel ways of considering forteana and linking disparate data in flashes of oddball genius. He regarded the mastering of clip-categorisation subtleties as an initiation into the Fortean Mysteries. An inveterate clipper, he was forever fishing publications out of waste bins at airports and elsewhere – "Truth in Trash" as he put it. He also referred to the Trashkashic records (a subcategory of the Akashic records). He was adept at coining neologisms, such as manimals (yeti, Bigfoot, etc); shaggy dogma ("the proper thing to wear for a while"); taughtology (conventional wisdom); holygrams (religious simulacra); and metaphorms (tulpas, or metaphors made flesh). "Buddy", he once asked, "can you spare a paradigm?" He founded a notional fortean order of chivalry called "the Knights of the Shapeless Table", and often ended his letters with "May the farce be with you!"

Ion was born on 10 December 1940 in Alyth, near Dundee in Scotland, to a Scottish father and Dutch mother. He claimed that an eagle once landed on his pram – a suitably shamanic omen. He grew up in Essex and went to Chigwell School, where he met the future theatrical impresario, Ken Campbell (Ken shared his birthday, but was a year younger). After graduating with third class honours from Worcester College, Oxford, in 1963, he became a financial confidence trickster around Europe and often stayed in the legendary Beat hotel in Paris where Burroughs, Gysin, and Ginsberg lived at the time, and where he experimented with Gysin's Dream Machine (**FT261:38–42**).

Then he dumped everything and "made the obligatory trip out to India". He developed "strange notions… which I do not exactly feel strongly about but which I tell to other people in the way that some people tell jokes. I think that I can amuse people with these things; but *also* I will plant a seed in their heads and they will start picking other ways. As a by-product I found that I could, in fact, have intuitive flashes and I learnt to become a fortune-teller." [Interview with Michael Coveney in *Plays and Players*, 1974].

> **"One should awaken one's mind without fixing it *anywhere*"**

I first met him in 1976, when he was working at Compendium Bookshop in Camden, north London, and would hang out at 106 Haverstock Hill, Chalk Farm – a squat near Ken Campbell's house – where I was living at the time. He introduced me to Bob Rickard and a couple of years later persuaded me to join Bob, Steve Moore and himself in what he called "the Gang of Fort" (a riff on the Gang of Four, denounced in China). We would meet once a week above the science fiction bookshop *Dark They Were And Golden Eyed* in Soho. (For more on the early days of *FT*, see **FT177:18–21**.)

Steve Moore recalls: "Ion is first mentioned in *FT* in April 1976 [**FT15:22**] as our 'Asian Correspondent in Hong Kong'. At that time he was apparently doing tarot readings in the Bottoms Up topless nightclub in Kowloon (used as a setting in the James Bond film *The Man with the Golden Gun*). He was frequently smuggling bottles of hash oil (in whisky bottles) from Nepal to Australia. He also smuggled semi-precious stones from Sri Lanka to England."

"Ion was a significant influence on the way *FT* developed in the early years," says Bob Rickard. "Ken Campbell [obit. **FT242:30–31**] was its first 'celebrity' subscriber. In late 1974, Ken invited me down to London for the premiere at the Royal Court theatre of his famous play *The Great Caper*, the central character of which was a fortean mage called 'Ion Will' (played by Warren Mitchell) [**FT6:2**]. That evening, at a celebration meal, Ken said he had a surprise and introduced me to the real Ion Will. He was tall, urbane and affably chatty, taking great pleasure in showing me how the wrinkles in his brow formed a special Chinese character. We got on greatly, probing each other's grasp of Fort's philosophy. He really was one of us!"

In August 1978, Ion financed a visit to Fortfest 78, the sixth annual INFO convention in Washington DC, by Bob, Steve and himself, whom he designated the "Three-Legged Toad Cabal" (the Chinese god of prosperity, Liu Hai, is always accompanied by the three-legged toad). "Prior to boarding the plane," said Bob, "we gathered armfuls of discarded newspapers from the waiting lounges. Once in seats we enacted a glorious forerunner of our fortsorts, with much laughter and rending of paper as we tore out stories. From that time and for the next 30 years, *FT* would get bulging envelopes of news clippings from Ion on his travels – and what treasure troves they were! A letter from Ion was some kind of instruction from a slightly deranged Master who defied categorisation. He would, for instance, number his clippings, and in the rambling text of the letter weld all the different stories together in a way that seemed to make sense. In the flesh Ion could be, by turns, annoyingly repetitive, childish, cruel and crass, then, minutes later, you'd realise that what you were hearing – and Ion was 'on' 24/7 – was really quite profound, erudite or inspirational."

In the 1970s, Ion financed his wanderings 'east of Suez' as a smuggler. His subsequent source of income, which he practised mainly in Africa, was scamming entries to an international telex directory that, supposedly, was to be published by an outfit in Switzerland. In September 1978,

LEFT: Ion in London's Chinatown, 2007.

© RJMR / SIGNS-AND-WONDERS.COM

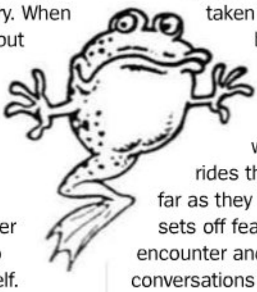
he attended the Grateful Dead's concerts outside Cairo, nestled in the dunes a short walk from the Great Pyramid [**FT164:24–25**]. He claimed to be the Dead's "official dope dealer" and arranged an *FT* subscription for Jerry Garcia.

Bob again: "Ion's accounts of his adventures always tested your credulity. On a drunken dare with (I think) a Russian marine, he tried to scale the great perimeter fence of the National Park in Madagascar 'to set the lemurs free'. On another occasion, he let slip that he was now an abbot of a Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka. Like something out of Frazer's *Golden Bough*, he said he had beaten an old man in ritual combat – a game of chess – and was awarded high office. It was during his stay in Sri Lanka that he investigated one of Erich von Däniken's exhibits: a wall painting in Polonnaruwa supposedly showing the Buddha descending from a UFO with another UFO hovering overhead [**FT36:22**]. The fresco had been heavily eroded but by climbing its protective scaffolding (forbidden by a big sign) he said it was clear the 'alien craft' was in fact a ceremonial parasol over the Buddha who was descending a staircase, not an alien escalator. It was an image from Buddhist iconography, known as 'Buddha's descent from the Tusita Heaven'."

Besides *The Great Caper* in 1974, the other collaboration between Ken and Ion, *Unfair Exchanges*, was broadcast on BBC2 on 20 January 1985 [**FT43:26**]. This was instrumental in their eventual estrangement. Both of them laid claim to the 'deus ex machina' in the plot, the telepathic phone network – which prefigured similar anxieties about the birth of sentience in the global Internet. Where Ken was interested in the telephone as a poltergeist-like Trickster, Ion had wanted to play up his idea of divination by telephone: you rang a number (or three numbers) at random, asked your question and followed the advice given, however absurd. As Ion put it in 1980: "Telepathic telephones try by wrong numbers and crossed lines to connect you to whom you *need* to speak to, rather than the person you only assume you want."

In the mid-1980s, Ion took off for Africa and spent most of the next 15 years there. In 1992, he sent *FT* an urgent message from Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire that he needed £600 to leave for Ghana to escape the CIA (or French secret service) after getting mixed up with a reckless CIA defector, and having his hotel room robbed (the whole episode, narrated later, was somewhat convoluted). He promised to pay us back… but we're still waiting. At some point in Côte d'Ivoire he married a Jehovah's Witness called Emilie.

Bernie Hausner recalls an incident he witnessed in Nairobi's elegant colonial five-star Fairmont Hotel in December 1988 that characterises Ion as "the Sahib" abroad. Ion walked into the bar and ordered a Bloody Mary. When the bartender started to put one together in a rather hasty manner, Ion said, "Here, here, my man, let me show you the proper way to prepare a perfect Bloody Mary," whereupon he jumped over the bar and proceeded to mix the ingredients himself. The bartender signalled for the manager, but Ion waxed eloquently over the importance of getting the precise amount of each ingredient in the tumbler, occasionally sipping the mixture to make certain it met his standards. A crowd gathered, transfixed by this person in a spotless white suit (the only clothes he had) talking about the history of Worcestershire sauce and other aspects of Bloody Mary-making. When he finally finished he took a sip, raised his glass toward Heaven, murmured, "Perfect!" and drank the entire mixture in one gulp. The crowd burst into applause and the manager insisted that the drink was on the house.



HUNT EMERSON

Lyall Watson [obit. **FT241:24**], author of *Supernature*, *Lifetide* and many other works of popular science, encountered Ion in a bar in Madagascar in the late 1980s. "He is one of those rare people capable of looking at old things in surprising, new ways," wrote Watson. "I soon discovered that a walk with him is like stepping sideways into another, roughly parallel, universe in which everyday words and objects become infected with vitality, and nothing can be taken for granted. He brings things to life. [..] He does not beat about the bush, but lies in wait for stray ideas, rides them bareback as far as they will go and then sets off fearlessly on foot." The encounter and their subsequent conversations in Sana'a, Singapore, Kerala, Nairobi, and London led to Watson's 1990 book *The Nature of Things: The Secret Life of Inanimate Objects*.

Ion returned to England for good in 2001 and stayed at various addresses in south London, such as a pad in Walworth called the Intergalactic Travel Agency or some such. Eventually, he was housed by the council and given a pension, having paid precisely nothing in tax all his life. He was very good at falling out with people: quite a few insisted that he never cross their thresholds again and the rift with Ken came when he threatened to disrupt his shows unless Ken paid him off, and mentioned the possibility of harm coming to Ken's daughter. Ken finally exploded: "I don't want to see you ever again, in this or any other life!" Sometimes it seemed to me that Ion burnt his bridges on purpose.

Rumour has it that all Ion's papers have been destroyed, but some letters are extant. Here is a passage from one to *Fortean Times* in 2000: "The Loonyverse is a 'prank', promulgated by Quirks, which are the ultimate particles that compose 'Quarks' (for a lark!) Actually, there is only *one* 'Quirk', but it has the gift of multi-location. Its attention to detail *is* impressive, I spose, but being impressed (by *anything*!) is a disease of juvenile minds. One should awaken one's mind without fixing it *anywhere*… and then make lots of jokes, and *bad puns*! Everything else is, uh, 'details', or, more correctly, wallpaper, décor… 'Fortean' events are, therefore, nowt but 'grace-notes', evidence of the Megaquirk's *style*."

Sometimes irascible and something of a loose cannon, Ion was generally a good friend to *Fortean Times* over the years, providing endless clippings and, in its early days, making a number of generous donations which helped the magazine survive. Much of the material he sent ended up in these pages, but he was curiously reluctant to write directly for publication. In all, we had four pieces from him – on plant sentience, mutations, 'the magma people' who lived in deep strata and caused problems for surface dwellers, and dream machines [**FT30:13**, **60:41**, **64:57**, **86:51**].

Ion Alexis Will, fortean raconteur and traveller, born Alyth, Scotland, 10 Dec 1940; died from a brain tumour, London 26 Dec 2010, aged 70.

Paul Sieveking

(Thanks to Dominic Swords for some additional material)

MATT PATTINSON

GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE Examines the rare instances of hauntings associated with undertakers.

GETTY IMAGES / AFP / FREDY AMARILES

ABOVE: William Betancur at his funeral parlour in Medellin, Colombia. He is collecting ghost stories.

HAUNTINGS IN THE FUNERAL INDUSTRY

Although the police don't appear to be covering up ghostly incidents (**FT273:16–17**), perhaps the funeral industry is shy about reporting them? After mentioning in a previous column the apparent absence of ghost reports from undertakers, morticians and other funeral industry professionals, I am delighted to learn of two recent stories suggesting exceptions to the rule.

Mike Covell, a writer from Kingston upon Hull, brought my attention to a feature in the *Hull and East Riding Mail* for 4 October 2010, looking at the work of Chanterlands Crematorium. In the article, Mike Anderson, who has worked at the crematorium in Chanterland Avenue, Hull, for 23 years, admits that he and his team have indeed had "a few funny experiences". He stated: "I was once in the transfer chamber and thought Carl, one of my colleagues, had walked up behind me, but I quickly realised he was nowhere to be seen. There was definitely someone behind me, so that was a bit weird." He added: "Now and then you can just feel somebody."

On the whole, Hull is rather proud of its funereal reputation, including its £4.2 million state-of-the-art mortuary and forensic centre, which were being celebrated in the local press in 2007 (Source: *Hull in Print*, Feb 2007). A haunted crematorium may be a first, though admittedly, one really might wish for more evidence than the spooky feeling of a presence; but maybe some discreet enquiries will reveal more.

Meanwhile, in Medellin, Colombia, the owner of a funeral company has begun a collection of ghost stories. Since the beginning of December 2010, William Betancur, manager of the Betancur Funeral Parlour, has so far listed 215 spirits, including 23 recorded in photographs and videos. A team of four funeral parlour workers in uniform act as collectors.

An undertaker sensed his pet dog four months after the pet died

"It's beyond question that many of the city's buildings and homes have ghosts," William Betancur told the press. "For years, we've heard stories about them and we thought the time had come to approach, catalogue and classify them through a census." Anybody can report an apparition, "They just have to phone or email us and depending on their physical manifestation – noises, sparkling light shows, or images – that's how they'll be classified."

Interestingly, Señor Betancur came up with the idea of the survey following his own experience of sensing his pet dog still going about his daily rounds at the funeral home, some four months after the pet died.

"Our plan is to take a year for the census… Later we're thinking of writing a book and – why not? – doing a movie or documentary series." *Source: [AFP] 30 Dec 2010.*

Beyond these examples, there seem to be few accounts of haunting involving professionals in the funeral business, although undertakers have occasionally been called upon to verify the conditions of bodies in cases of post-mortem visions of the dead by relatives.

A supposedly true story of a stranded undertaker trapped in a snow-bound hearse during a blizzard witnessing a procession of phantom monks appears in the collection *In*

OTHER GHOST NEWS by PAUL SIEVEKING

PHANTOM BIKER LEGEND

Last summer, a rumour was going round Newcastle, New South Wales, that newly qualified drivers – know locally as "P Plates" – who reached the speed of 180km/h (111mph) on an unlit road called Lemon Tree Passage could conjure up the ghost of a 20-year-old motorcyclist who was killed in a collision with a speeding car on the road in November 2007. The ghost allegedly appeared as a bright light chasing after drivers, trying to make them slow down. Several videos claiming to show the "ghostly" bright light filmed from the rear window of speeding cars were uploaded to YouTube. The lights are clearly visible, sometimes close to the cars and other times in the far distance. Whether they are material or spectral is open to speculation. As fears spread that speeding teenagers were distracted while driving either by the ghost or the act of filming, local police were worried that the stunt was putting other motorists at risk, and issued a warning. "We want speeding drivers to know that the only bright light they'll be seeing in their rear windows will be the red and blue lights of a police car," said a spokeswoman. *(Sydney) D.Telegraph, 17 Aug; D.Mail, 18 Aug 2010.*

HAUNTED MATTRESS

"Since I returned from a holiday to see my children in Canada in September last year, it has felt like someone or something is in my mattress," said Kevin Cartwright, who lives on Infirmary Walk, Worcester. "It feels as if they [the spirits] are pushing it. It is driving me mad that I just can't get a full night's sleep. I've had more than 135 nights of this and it's just lunacy. I need help. I survive on a disability allowance and have bought a new mattress, and also an electric blanket as someone suggested that it might help, but it's still not working."

Mr Cartwright, 56, a retired restaurant owner who survived a brain tumour in 2004, has had eight friends test his bed, and four of them had a similar experience, with some of them feeling very scared. "It can't just be me if others have felt it," he said. He consulted three female mediums, who told him that the spirits were children, and not to be afraid of them as they were playing. Since their visit, he believes most of the spirits have left, except one. Mr Cartwright lives next to an old school building, and the women said they believed recent building work nearby may have disturbed the spirits [see 'Renovation Hauntings', **FT268:30–33**]. *Worcester News, 2 Feb 2011.*

Search of the Supernatural (1975) by Paul Travis. The incident allegedly occurred in the late 1930s, but neither the name of the undertaker nor a location beyond "the fells" are given. Travis did not rule out a hallucination in the freezing conditions; alternatively, details might suggest a near-death experience.

Another case (where details were filed by the Society for Psychical Research) was a mortician called to witness the unaccountable movements of a cremation urn at a property in north London in 1983. The urn contained the ashes of a resident cremated the month before, but the credibility of one of the best-witnessed incidents was undermined by the fact that all present had consumed a substantial quantity of wine (See Mary Rose Barrington: "The Urn That Turned", *The Psi Researcher,* no.8, 1993).

Of course, there may be fundamental reasons why accounts of paranormal experiences would be suppressed or discouraged. Obviously, there is the need to respect confidentiality and show appropriate sensitivity towards bereaved relatives. Gone are the days when an undertaker might be expected to provide stories "matching the films of Mr Boris Karloff" for macabre entertainment (John Saltmarsh, ed: *Archives of the Eastern Counties Folklore Society 1936–39*, Cambridge University Library). Furthermore, as Ian Wils for magic on remarks in his *In Search of Ghosts* (1996): "...although ghosts are often people who have been murdered or committed suicide, their problem seems to be not so much due to this as to their not having subsequently received the funeral rites that they would have considered appropriate." In the context of such beliefs, for undertakers, morticians and other interment professionals to report manifestations might provoke concern, or complaints from distressed relatives, and even be taken as post-mortem criticism of the services rendered. Equally, reporting manifestations might lead to suspicions that the individual concerned was not suited to such work. Alternatively, the lack of any personal or emotional connection with the deceased might be another determining factor.

However, the lack of reports of manifestations may be analogous to the relative absence of ghost experiences in graveyards and cemeteries, a pattern noted as long ago as 1914 by St John D Seymour in *True Irish Ghost Stories*. Despite Shakespeare's Puck in *A Midsummer's Night Dream* speaking of "...ghosts wandering here and there/Troop home to churchyards" and singing in the closing scene of the play:

Now it is the time of night,
That the graves, all gaping wide,
Everyone lets forth his sprite,
In the churchyard paths to glide

– and similar notions expressed in *Hamlet* (Act iii,2) – the numerous churchyards and cemeteries of the British Isles are remarkably lacking in ghost reports when compared to pubs, for example. So it will be interesting to see if any new ghost reports are received from the funeral industry in years to come.

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Strange deaths

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

AN UNNAMED "BLACK WIDOW" SUICIDE bomber, who planned a terrorist attack near Red Square in Moscow on New Year's Eve, was killed when an unexpected text message set off her bomb too early, according to Russian security services. They believe that a spam message from her mobile phone operator wishing her a Happy New Year received hours before the planned attack triggered her suicide belt, killing her at a safe house. She was thought to be part of the same group who struck Moscow's Domodedovo airport on 24 January. Islamist terrorists in Russia often use new mobile phones as detonators. They are usually kept switched off until the last moment, but in this case the terrorist was evidently careless. *D.Telegraph, 27 Jan 2011.*

TERRY COLON

A FIGHTING cock appears to have taken deadly revenge on its owner for forcing it back into the ring too soon. It attacked Singrai Soren and slit his throat with the metal blades attached to its legs. One of the dead man's friends in the West Bengal village of Mohanpur, known only as Desai, said: "The cock tried to get away from the ring several times, but Soren pushed it back repeatedly. This upset it and it attacked him." Fighting cocks are usually given a break of at least an hour before facing another opponent, he explained. "Most masters are satisfied with the cash reward of £28 for every fight and a dead opponent to feast on." A few days later, on 30 January, a cock stabbed Jose Luis Ochoa, 35, in the leg with a blade attached to its leg at an illegal cockfight in Tulare County, California. Ochoa died in hospital about two hours later. *D.Mail, 20 Jan; (London) Evening Standard, Independent, 8 Feb 2011.*

KATIE DAGLEY, 19, WAS KILLED BY A SLUG or snail. She was driving home from work on 4 August 2010 when her Ford Ka collided with a Fiat on a single-lane bridge at Alvecote, near Tamworth, West Midlands. She died at the scene. An investigation found that traffic lights controlling access to the bridge had malfunctioned 20 minutes before the crash when a slug or snail left a trail of slime across a circuit board. This caused a short-circuit and jammed the lights on green at both ends of the bridge. *D.Mail, Sun, 31 Jan 2011.*

DOCTOR MICHELLE FERRARI-GEGERSON, 37, died when her electric neck massage machine caught on her necklace and strangled her in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on Christmas Eve. *Sun, 30 Dec 2010.*

ALCWYN JENKINS, 72, WAS UMPIRING a cricket match between Swansea and Llangennech in Wales in April when a cricket ball hit him on the side of the head, knocking him unconscious. He was airlifted to hospital where he was pronounced dead soon after arrival. In October, golfer Hiroshi Tango, 69, was hit on the head by a stray ball on a course in Chino, California, and died nine days later. *Eastern Daily Press, 22 April; Sun, 19 Oct 2010.*

IN JANUARY 2011, A boy of six was killed by an icicle falling from a five-storey building in St Petersburg. Such deaths are unfortunately quite common in Russia; for instance, three successive days in February 2008 saw five icicle fatalities in the central Russian town of Samara and one in nearby Otradny. *The Australian, 3 Mar 2008; Sun, 15 Jan 2011.*

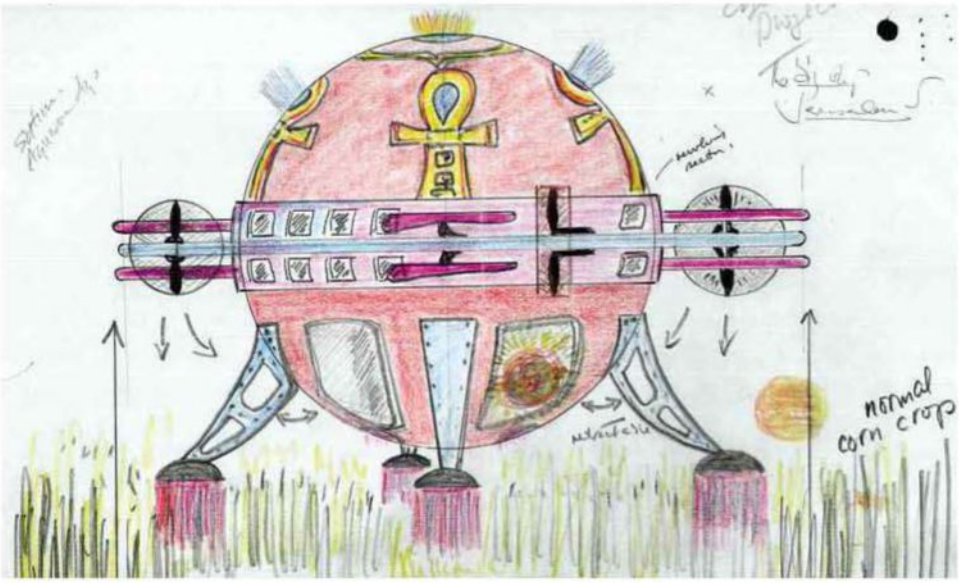
A SWEDISH WOMAN ACCIDENTALLY SHOT dead a 70-year-old cross-country skier when a bullet she fired ricocheted off an elk and struck the man, killing him instantly. The incident took place on 4 December in a forest region near Ljungby, 250km (155 miles) south-west of Stockholm. Every year, about 300,000 Swedes, including more than 14,000 women, go elk hunting. *D.Telegraph, 8 Dec 2010.*

AN IRANIAN MAN CALLED ABDOLREZA Gharabat attracted several disciples in Khuzestan province after claiming to be God, but was hanged on 26 January for apostasy, a capital offence under Iran's sharia law. Other capital offences include murder, adultery, rape, armed robbery and drug trafficking. *Toronto Sun, 1 Feb 2011.*

BRITAIN'S X-FILES

17. Missing files and UFO hoaxes

DR DAVID CLARKE, consultant for The National Archives UFO project, summarises the highlights from the latest cache of Ministry of Defence documents.



ABOVE: An eyewitness sketch of a "spaceship" creating crop circles.

The single largest collection so far of secret Ministry of Defence UFO files was opened to the public in March as the disclosure programme – now in its fourth year – nears its end. Included in the 8,500 pages are formerly secret policy and intelligence documents covering a 60-year span from the 1950s almost to the present day. Within hours of the release, the National Archives noted a record three million visitors to its UFO website where the 35 new files can be downloaded.

One 1997 file contains letters from film-maker and fortean writer John Keeling, whose research has revealed how the British authorities were fooled by one of the most successful UFO hoaxes in history (as Keeling himself wrote in **FT228:32–41**). Early in the morning of 4 September 1967, police forces were flooded with calls from the public reporting that six 5ft (1.5m)-diameter metallic 'flying saucers' had been discovered in a perfect line across Southern England. After 12 hours of mayhem, during which four police forces, bomb disposal units, the army and the MoD's intelligence branch were mobilised, it emerged that the saucers were a rag-day hoax by engineering students from Farnborough Technical College. The papers reveal that the MoD were concerned that secrets about intelligence interest in UFOs might be revealed if the retired RAF officer who became involved in the investigation revealed any official secrets to Keeling (DEFE 24/1986/1).

Two files contain examples of my own protracted dealings with Ministry officials that led them to describe me as one of their most "persistent correspondents" (DEFE 24/2030/1; 2032/1). These files chronicle in great detail the early stages of my campaign, using the Code of Practice for Access to Government Information introduced by John Major's government and, from 2005, the Freedom of Information Act, to persuade the MoD to end the unnecessary secrecy that surrounded official interest in UFOs. Some of the files I prised from the government's archives, such as the report by the Flying Saucer Working Party (**FT164:43**) and the background papers for the United Nations and the House of Lords UFO debate (**FT201:40–41**), are included in this release.

THE MISSING FILES

One revelation that caused a buzz among conspiracy-minded ufologists was that the MoD had destroyed whole collections of UFO files as recently as 1990 for reasons they couldn't explain. The Ministry was reluctant to publicly admit that files had been lost, as they feared this might add fuel to allegations they were involved in a cover-up. This was a real own-goal in their attempts to persuade the public they had nothing to hide. Readers will know that we revealed the loss of some intelligence files back in 2005, when thousands of sensitive papers were found to be contaminated with asbestos dust (**FT189:30**). But well before that time officials had continued to destroy UFO files – despite an undertaking given to MPs in 1967 by the Under Secretary of State for the RAF, Merlyn Rees MP, that in future all files would be preserved. The most frank admission appears in papers covering an internal MoD exchange following the release of the famous "Rendlesham File" in 2001. When this file was sent to me in May of that year, it was immediately obvious from the paper trail that further documents must be held by the secretive Defence Intelligence Staff section DI55 that had an interest in UFOs and foreign technology (**FT226:32–33**). But an archive search by MoD records staff revealed that all DI55 UFO files covering the period 1980–82 had been destroyed, although other files from surrounding years had survived. Even worse, record staff could not say who authorised the destruction of the files or why, as it was MoD policy to shred the Destruction Certificates after five years (DEFE 24/2026/1). The MoD were warned that if what it called this "apparent anomaly in the records" were made public "…it could be interpreted to mean that a deliberate attempt had been made to eradicate the records covering this incident".

Why were these files destroyed? The most likely answer is that, at the time, officials believed they contained nothing worth preserving. Some 95 per cent of all government documents are earmarked for destruction at "first review" stage. If a desk officer decides they contain nothing of public interest at this stage, then their fate is sealed. As many desk officers were scornful of UFO reports, the fact that so many files have survived is little short of a miracle. Hundreds of earlier UFO files, including Air Ministry records on the famous Lakenheath-Bentwaters incident of 1956 (**FT213:28–32**) were shredded. So we know these DI55 files were just a fraction of the total number "lost" in the chaotic and disorganised MoD records system that prevailed before Freedom of Information regulations forced them to put their house in order. The Ministry have said that by releasing all their surviving UFO files they hope to "help counter the maze of rumour and frequently ill-informed speculation" that surrounds their role. Unfortunately, one by-product of this open policy is that MoD have produced a stick that conspiracy theorists can now beat them with.

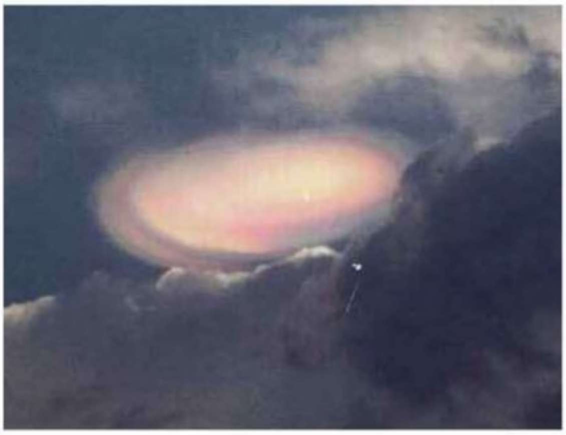
Among the more striking sighting reports in this collection is an account describing an "unusual atmospheric occurrence" observed by a member of the Royal Air Force in Sri Lanka. This report was accompanied by two remarkable colour photographs clearly showing an example of what the MoD was beginning to refer to as a UAP – an "unidentified aerial phenomenon". The airman was on holiday at Habarana in the north of the island on the afternoon of 27 March 2004 when he "noticed a partial aura in the sky", then heard what he believed was a clap of thunder. Soon afterwards "a ring like a doughnut" appeared in the sky. It was "orange in colour with a white/cream finger pushed through… the head of the column glowed an orange colour [and] behind the doughnut was a second cloud of colour and a further ring of orange."

Reporting his story on his return to the UK, he added: "The only way I can describe the sighting is that of an atomic or other type of nuclear explosion, the cloud from which did not rise in the sky, but headed from the high atmosphere towards the earth."

The phenomenon shown in the photos is almost certainly an iridescent ice cloud, high in the atmosphere, backlit by the setting sun. But the observer remained convinced he saw an "air burst of some kind or other". The MoD was less impressed. From 1997, their interest in UFO reports, even those from 'credible witnesses', was declining and their response was simply "[This] is a matter for the Sri Lankan government and you may wish to pursue your enquiries with them." (DEFE 24/2036/1).

CLOSING BRITAIN'S X-FILES

Other stories are far less credible, but frequently amusing. A letter dated 26 October 1998 from a man in Barnes, London, describes his "alien abduction" experience: "I found it difficult to sleep on Saturday night and at about 12.15am went downstairs for a glass of milk… after a few moments I heard a 'distant roar' of engines getting louder and louder. Suddenly a huge 'craft' appeared over the house, heading in a westerly direction at speed. It was a large cigar-shaped vehicle with big projectiles on each side, like wings… there also seemed to be a line of lights (which I took to be windows) along the side. It disappeared into the distance but as it did so it seemed to be getting closer to the ground."



ABOVE: The striking colour photograph of a 'UAP' taken by a member of the RAF in Sri Lanka.

A ring like a doughnut appeared in the sky

The letter-writer told UFO desk staff he was "bloody terrified", but instead of calling the police returned to bed and "surprisingly fell asleep". Next morning at breakfast, he was surprised to hear a radio time-check for the 9am news: "I thought that seemed a bit early and looked at my watch which said 10 o'clock! Somehow, during the night I had a gained A WHOLE HOUR!" He began to wonder if he had been abducted by aliens. His letter adds: "I have checked my body for marks but found nothing. NEVERTHELESS I am very concerned. I have told NOBODY but you. I didn't sleep a wink last night and have made an appointment with my doctor to get some tranquillisers. What do you think? Have I had a CLOSE ENCOUNTER?"

The MoD didn't think so. Their response suggested the "craft" was a terrestrial airship (although the wings on the sides might indicate an airliner). As for the "abduction" theory, the desk officer pointed out: "[T]he clocks were put back one hour at 2am on Sunday and I think you will find this would account for you gaining an hour." (DEFE 24/1999/1)

This letter was selected at random from hundreds that poured through the Ministry's letterbox during the X-Files craze of the 1990s. The policy files reveal how the "media obsession" with UFOs that followed the 50th anniversary of the Roswell incident in 1997 led to a doubling of the workload for the staff of the tiny MoD secretariat responsible for handing public correspondence on UFOs. In a briefing dated April 1997, UFO desk head Martin Fuller wrote that he and desk officer Kerry Philpott were struggling to answer a stream of letters "from members of the public… seeking information about the existence of alien life forms, or seeking a detailed investigation/explanation for… allegations of abduction by aliens, out of the body experiences, animal mutilations, crop circles". (DEFE 24/1986/1) The papers suggest they partly blamed the increased workload on the media activities of Philpott's predecessor, UFO desk jockey Nick Pope, whose second book, *The Uninvited* (on alien abductions) was published in 1997.

The doubling of the UFO workload led directly to a major change in MoD policy. In February of that year, a 24-hour UFO hotline answerphone service was launched to make it easier for people to report their sightings directly to Whitehall. But from April it was agreed that only those reports made by credible witnesses such as police officers, aircrew and other service personnel, that had some degree of corroboration and/or were reported in a timely fashion, would be subject to further checks. The remainder would simply be filed and forgotten. The formerly secret papers make it clear that, in reality, the MoD had no real interest in receiving any "singleton reports from the public which tell us nothing". But, in private, officials revealed they had no choice but to continue logging sightings. Anything less, they said, "would reveal our [true] policy and there would be a risk that it would be divulged to the UFO fraternity". These discussions preceded the decision by DI55 to remove themselves from the MoD's UFO work with the completion of the Condign report in 2000 (**FT211:4–6**). It took another nine years before the inevitable decision to end this charade was taken. In November 2009, against a backdrop of public service cuts, the MoD pulled the plug on its UFO hotline and closed its 'UFO desk'. It had no further interest in receiving any reports from any source in future. Britain's X-Files were closed for good. FT

Author biography

DR DAVID CLARKE is head of the Journalism department at Sheffield Hallam University and consultant for the National Archives for the ongoing release of the MoD's UFO files.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST

FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

30 LAKE MONSTERS OF ITALY AND GERMANY

ULRICH MAGIN puzzles over reports of serpentine denizens of European waters – even inlcuding one he made up himself (only to find it had already been spotted).

In November 1946, a monster appeared suddenly in Italy's Lake Como, making headlines first in the regional press, then in Italy, Europe, and even the United States:

Como's "rose-coloured" sea monster developed "gleaming red eyes and green scales"' today and intrepid hunting parties patrolled the eastern shore determined to do him in with pitchforks and shotguns the next time he appears.

Three fishermen said they spotted the marine mammoth Wednesday. They said he had "gleaming eyes, green scales and black stripes". "We were terror-stricken," said two of the fishermen, with the third nodding an anxious assent. The exact size of the monster still is unsettled. Some say he's about 100ft [30m] long. Others say he's only 12ft [3.7m] long. All agree, however, that Lake Como is no longer a place for fishermen. The firemen have taken over.

Firemen… patrol the lake shore day and night, armed with weapons ranging from shotguns to pitchforks. The slightest ripple on the blue water attracts their attention… Dredging barges cruise along the eastern lake shore. One fisherman claimed he wounded the colourful monster with a rifle shot. Barge operators said that might help them to capture the beast.

Whether this new giant of the deep is the same one an Italian journalist said he sighted six years ago has not yet been established. The Italian journalist didn't say anything about "black spots or great horns" on the head of the monster he saw. Villagers can't remember whether the Italian journalist's monster had green or red scales.

"We were going to Varenna in a rowboat," one of the eyewitnesses said, "when we saw on our left a strange, foaming wake, my companion remarked how strange it was – because the lake is always so calm. We turned and saw an enormous, frightful head.

LA CVS CONSTANTIENSIS XX· TAB· NOVA
Das Al gôw
Linz gôw
Das thür gôw

"The monster opened its mouth and we could see big eyes and black spots or bumps on its head. It swallowed some water, plunged and re-emerged with the fins on its body showing. We started to row away fast – and when we looked back it was gone." [1]

Italian researcher Giorgio Castiglioni has shown, in several well-argued papers, that the whole episode (which comprised several sightings) was a well-orchestrated hoax. [2] But it's an odd thing – whenever you look for a precursor of a recent event, you turn up historic antedecents.

Tourists on their European tour in the 19th century visited the usual hot spots of the well-to-do – Lake Maggiore, Lake Como, Germany's Lake Constance – and reported interesting monsters that predate Nessie by years.

German painter Max Nohl gives a hint in a diary of his journey through Italy. From Lake Como, under the heading "Cadenabbia, 8 August 1858", he writes: "We had several amusing events. Kids surrounded us, there was an alleged sea serpent." [3] We can only wonder what this single reference meant – did he and his friends actually see something strange? Did the children report it to them?

Brooklyn author Virginia Johnson (1849–1916) lived most of her life in Europe. In one of her travel books, *Lake Como: A World's Shrine*, she has this to say about the fishermen of the lake:

Who knows if there are fabulous creatures, half-monster and half-merman in the depths of the lake, such as the ancients believed in? The ledges are treacherous, and bodies of the drowned seldom recovered here. What fright if one of these shapes got entangled in the net sometime! [4]

I know nothing about Ian H Driscoll apart from his books about aircraft and the War. Some time before 1945, he must have visited Lake Como when one of his acquaintances, Daphne, thought she hooked a monster:

We drove on to Villa Carlotta for tea, after which we hired a boat and decided to spend the summer evening fishing. Our luck was not outstanding, although Daphne nearly upset the boat in one wild moment of enthusiasm when she apparently imagined that she had hooked a member of the whale family. When we did get her line in, however, there was nothing but her untampered bait on the hook, although she would stand for no contradiction, in spite of this solid fact, that anything less than the Loch Ness Monster had made contact. [5]

One year later, of course, the Italians created their own monster, and rumours and sightings have been reported ever since.

I myself invented a monster in Lake Constance, Europe's third largest lake, on the border between Germany, Switzerland and Austria. I had a few hoaxed reports and some old allusions in the legends about saints when I wrote a suspense novel about a giant, carnivorous newt which suddenly threatens the cosy banks of the lake in 2008. [6]

Little did I know that *this* monster, entirely of my own invention – or so I believed – had already been reported in the 19th century by an English traveller! British Army officer Lieutenant Colonel Charles à Court Repington (1858–1925) worked as a war correspondent for the *Times*. In his autobiography, *Records of an Active Life*, [7] he reports from Mellau in the Bregenzerwald at some point between 1871 and 1875: "The local people from the hills round used to frequent the inn to hold various festivals, and on these occasions there was hung up a scroll with a picture of a strange monster, half-fish, half-snake, which was supposed to inhabit Lake Constance, and all sorts of odes were sung to it."

NOTES

[1] "Rose-Coloured Sea Monster Terrorizes Italy Fishermen", *Reading Eagle*, 22 Nov 1946, p35.

[2] Giorgio Castiglioni: *Un mostro nel lago di Como*, 1946; *Studi Della Biblioteca Comunale di Cavallasca* 1, 1999, pp6–8.

[3] Maximilian Nohl: *Tagebuch einer italienischen Reise*, Ebner & Seubert, 1866, p53. Incidentally, it was another Max Nohl who discovered the mysterious pyramids in Rock Lake, Wisconsin!

[4] Virginia Wales Johnson: *Lake Como: a world's shrine*, AS Barnes, 1902, p192.

[5] Ian H Driscoll: *Mercury sped on*, J Crowther & Goodsman, 1945, p133.

[6] Ulrich Magin: *Der Fisch*, Aufbau, Berlin, 2008.

[7] Charles à Court Repington: *Records of an Active Life*, Houghton, 2001, p31.

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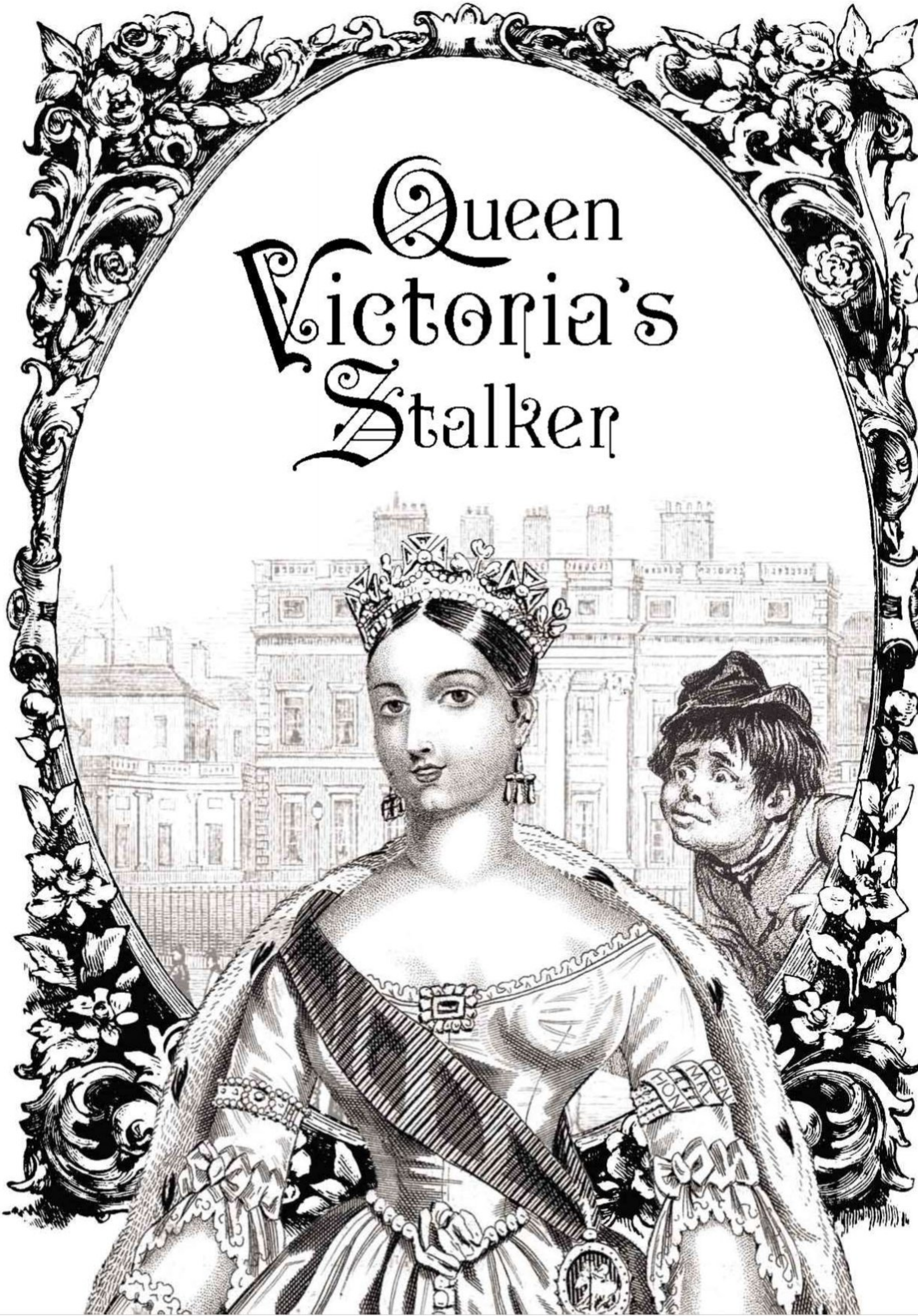
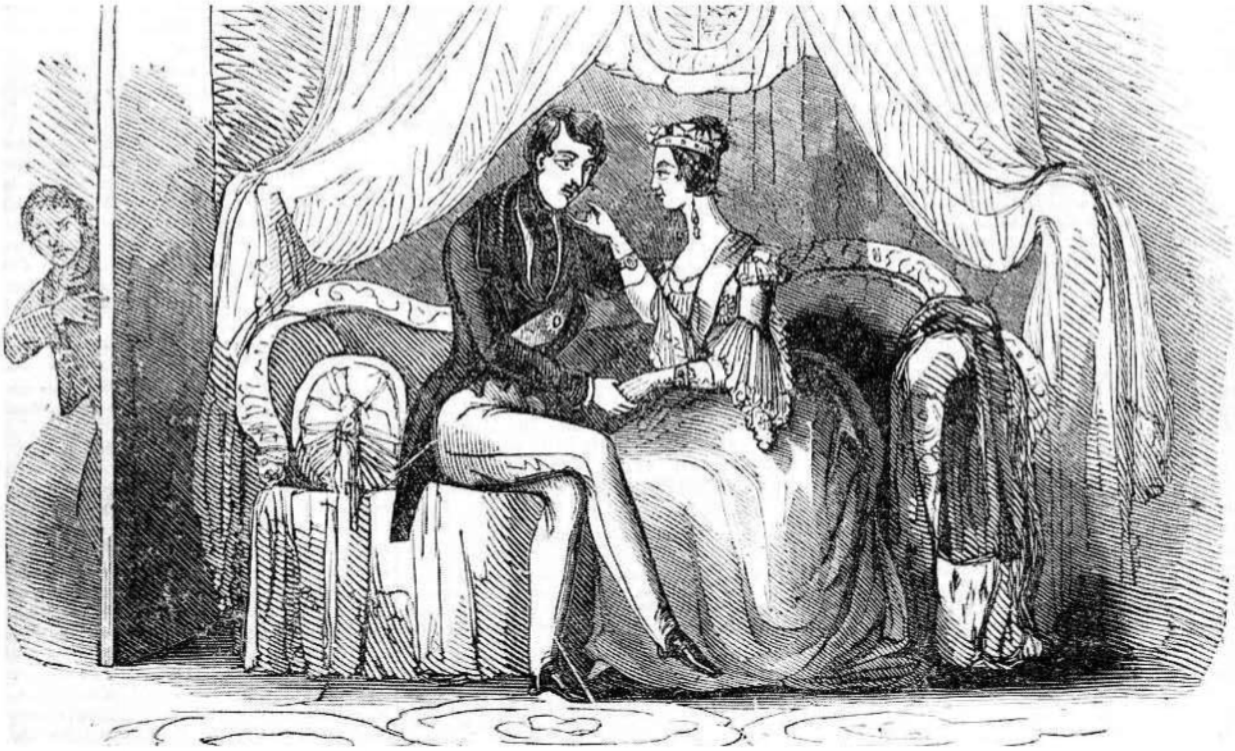
Queen Victoria's Stalker





Celebrity stalkers frequently make newspaper headlines these days, but they are nothing new, says **JAN BONDESON**. Here, he tells the remarkable story of the 'Boy Jones', who repeatedly broke into Buckingham Palace to rummage through the underwear of the young and newly-crowned Queen Victoria. Pictures from the author's collection.

Most of us today think of Queen Victoria as an elderly, corpulent matron, dignified but forbidding-looking. But in 1838, she was young and not unattractive; just crowned Queen of her country, and still virginal and unmarried. Throughout Britain, there was widespread sympathy for, and curiosity about, the young Queen. Her coronation was viewed by huge and enthusiastic crowds, who were looking forward to her spring-like reign.

In 1838, there was no such thing as royal security. Queen Victoria's court at Buckingham Palace was run on well-nigh mediæval procedures by a number of inert functionaries, and no person was directly responsible for her security. Three groups of equally ineffective royal guardians operated independently of each other: the elderly and feeble royal porters, the pages (who valued their night's sleep), and the military sentries, who didn't take their work very seriously.

This slack regime was to be exposed by a determined young stalker – the extraordinary 'Boy Jones', who developed an obsession with the young Queen. Time after time, he sneaked into Buckingham Palace to spy on her, sit on the throne, and rummage in her private apartments. "Supposing he had come into the Bedroom, how frightened I should have been!" the fearful Victoria wrote in her journal after the Boy Jones had been discovered lurking underneath a sofa in the room next to the one where she slept.

The Boy lurked beneath a sofa in the Queen's dressing room

THE BOY JONES

Edward 'The Boy' Jones was born in 1824, the son of a drunken old tailor whose entire family lodged in a single room and slept on miserable rags. Due to his work-shy and irresponsible nature, and his habit of never washing, the prospects of Edward gaining steady employment looked bleak indeed. The Boy Jones was not insane, but his habits were very odd: he seldom spoke to anyone and spent all evening building cardboard houses and reading from a pile of scrap paper he had purchased for a penny.

In December 1838, the Boy Jones was caught inside Buckingham Palace, where he had rummaged round in the empty bedrooms, including Queen Victoria's private apartments. Since he had stolen a quantity of underwear, and some other palace mementoes, "the Sweep in the Palace", as he was called for being so very dirty, was tried at the Westminster Sessions. Thanks to a clever barrister and a good-natured judge, his palace intrusion was treated as a joke, and he was acquitted.

ABOVE: "The Sweep In The Palace", a caricature from the *Sunday Chronicle*, 4 April 1841, shows the intruder spying upon Her Majesty.

In December 1840, the Boy Jones was back in the Palace. This time, he was caught lurking underneath a sofa in Queen Victoria's dressing room. He had been there for several hours, witnessing the Queen's private *tête-à-tête* with Prince Albert. It would have been perfectly possible for him to burst into the young Queen's bedroom, pull off her bedclothes and shout: "View halloo!" There was widespread outrage that such a filthy ragamuffin should be able to enter Buckingham Palace at will, and the incompetent royal guardians were rightly lambasted by the press. But 'simple trespass', even into a royal palace, was not a criminal offence. Due to the delicate question as to what the Boy had seen in Queen Victoria's dressing room, he was tried *in camera* by the Privy Council, and sentenced to three months in prison as a

FACING PAGE: ILLUSTRATION CREATED BY ETIENNE GILFILLAN. BOY JONES IMAGE EXTRACTED FROM THE COVER OF JAN BONDESON'S BOOK *QUEEN VICTORIA'S STALKER* (AMBERLEY PUBLISHING, STROUD, 2010)

rogue and a vagabond.

After he had been released from prison in March 1841, it did not take long for the Boy Jones to find his way back into Buckingham Palace for a third time; he was arrested in the Picture Gallery, eating some cold meat and potatoes he had stolen in the royal kitchen. Once more, he was brought before the Privy Council, and sentenced to three more months in jail. There was much speculation as to how an uneducated teenage boy could enter Buckingham Palace whenever the fancy took him: did he climb down the chimneys, or did he have an accomplice in the palace kitchen? The Boy himself, probably truthfully, claimed that each time he had felt an urge to visit the Queen he had got in through an unsecured lower ground floor window. There was also speculation as to how many times he had been inside Buckingham Palace but escaped undetected. His father said that Edward had often been away for days on end; when asked what he had been doing, he had refused to explain his absence.

MAD ABOUT THE BOY

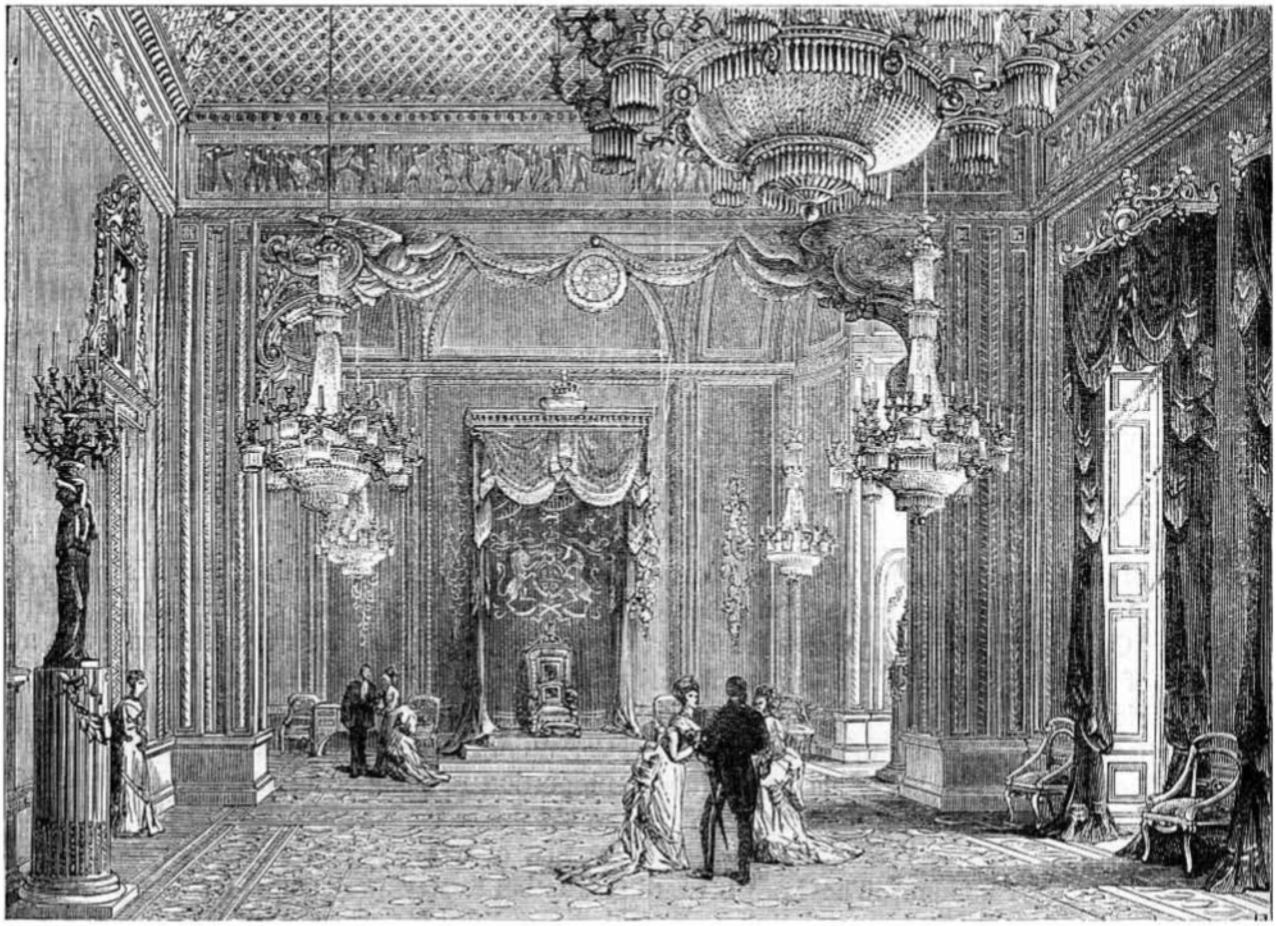
Lord Melbourne's government wanted to get rid of the Boy Jones at any cost, being understandably fearful that he might injure or even assassinate the Queen. They took the extreme step of having him shanghaied – kidnapped and placed on board a ship bound for Brazil. When the Boy returned, like a bad penny, he was again clandestinely kidnapped by government agents and forced to serve as a sailor in the Royal Navy, without charge or trial, in breach of *habeas corpus*. The Boy Jones twice tried to escape and was twice recaptured, ending up serving as little more than a galley slave for six years. Charles Dickens and other humanitarians objected to this illegal and cruel treatment, but Queen Victoria and her government did not relent. The real reason for his eventual release, in 1848, was that they feared the adverse newspaper publicity if he should die of disease while still a prisoner.

Sadly, the Boy Jones's lengthy cruise had not changed his ways. In 1849, he was convicted for burgling the house of a solicitor and transported to Fremantle, Western Australia, where he was released on a ticket-of-leave and employed as a seller of pies. But hard work was not to his liking, and he found some way to return to England, where he was again arrested for theft in 1857, being sentenced to six months in prison. In September 1868, a newspaper could report that Mr Jones, who had just been made Minister of Public Works in Victoria, was in fact the brother of the notorious Boy. Both had started life at the very bottom of society, and the advancement of Mr Jones was heralded as "a singular illustration of the changes that take place in new and thriving colonies". The Boy Jones was also in Australia, and few years earlier he had been leading an industrious life and living with his brother in Melbourne.

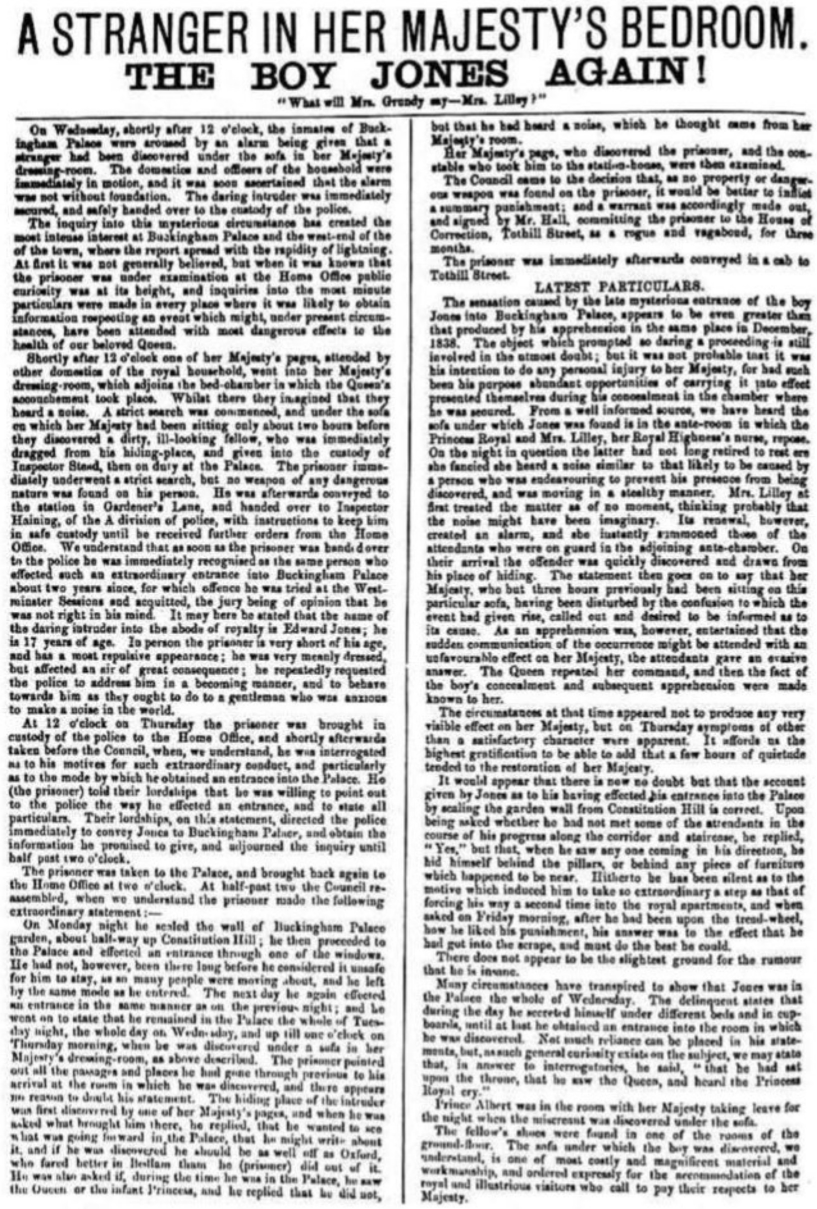
He was caught eating meat and potatoes in the royal kitchen

When the journalist Sir Henry Lucy wrote a magazine article asking what had become of the Boy Jones, a resident of Perth, Western Australia, wrote back to him with some extraordinary information, namely that the Boy Jones had emigrated to Perth, where he "rose to the high estate of town crier". Unfortunately, the Boy Jones's fame had preceded him: "When he went forth, bell in hand, to perform his important functions, the naughty boys of Perth were accustomed to gather round him and make pointed inquiries as to the approaches to Buckingham Palace and the health of the Queen. The man Jones, angered beyond self-restraint, occasionally made dashes at the enemy, committing assaults which made his appearance in the police court familiar."

On Boxing Day 1893, an old man known locally as Thomas Jones had decided to go into Bairnsdale, East Gippsland, to get something to drink. He was lodging with a fireman named George John Hadfield,



ABOVE: The Throne Room, a regular haunt of the Boy Jones, from *Walford's Old and New London*.



A STRANGER IN HER MAJESTY'S BEDROOM.

THE BOY JONES AGAIN!

"What will Mrs. Grundy say—Mrs. Lilley?"

On Wednesday, shortly after 12 o'clock, the inmates of Buckingham Palace were aroused by an alarm being given that a stranger had been discovered under the sofa in her Majesty's dressing-room. The domestics and officers of the household were immediately in motion, and it was soon ascertained that the alarm was not without foundation. The daring intruder was immediately secured, and safely handed over to the custody of the police.

The inquiry into this mysterious circumstance has created the most intense interest at Buckingham Palace and the west-end of the of the town, where the report spread with the rapidity of lightning. At first it was not generally believed, but when it was known that the prisoner was under examination at the Home Office public curiosity was at its height, and inquiries into the most minute particulars were made in every place where it was likely to obtain information respecting an event which might, under present circumstances, have been attended with most dangerous effects to the health of our beloved Queen.

Shortly after 12 o'clock one of her Majesty's pages, attended by other domestics of the royal household, went into her Majesty's dressing-room, which adjoins the bed-chamber in which the Queen's accouchement took place. Whilst there they imagined that they heard a noise. A strict search was commenced, and under the sofa on which her Majesty had been sitting only about two hours before they discovered a dirty, ill-looking fellow, who was immediately dragged from his hiding-place, and given into the custody of Inspector Stead, then on duty at the Palace. The prisoner immediately underwent a strict search, but no weapon of any dangerous nature was found on his person. He was afterwards conveyed to the station in Gardener's Lane, and handed over to Inspector Haining, of the A division of police, with instructions to keep him in safe custody until he received further orders from the Home Office. We understand that as soon as the prisoner was handed over to the police he was immediately recognised as the same person who effected such an extraordinary entrance into Buckingham Palace about two years since, for which offence he was tried at the Westminster Sessions and acquitted, the jury being of opinion that he was not right in his mind. It may here be stated that the name of the daring intruder into the abode of royalty is Edward Jones; he is 17 years of age. In person the prisoner is very short of his age, and has a most repulsive appearance; he was very meanly dressed, but affected an air of great consequence; he repeatedly requested the police to address him in a becoming manner, and to behave towards him as they ought to do to a gentleman who was anxious to make a noise in the world.

At 12 o'clock on Thursday the prisoner was brought in custody of the police to the Home Office, and shortly afterwards taken before the Council, when, we understand, he was interrogated as to his motives for such extraordinary conduct, and particularly as to the mode by which he obtained an entrance into the Palace. He (the prisoner) told their lordships that he was willing to point out to the police the way he effected an entrance, and to state all particulars. Their lordships, on this statement, directed the police immediately to convey Jones to Buckingham Palace, and obtain the information he promised to give, and adjourned the inquiry until half past two o'clock.

The prisoner was taken to the Palace, and brought back again to the Home Office at two o'clock. At half-past two the Council reassembled, when we understand the prisoner made the following extraordinary statement:—

On Monday night he scaled the wall of Buckingham Palace garden, about half-way up Constitution Hill; he then proceeded to the Palace and effected an entrance through one of the windows. He had not, however, been there long before he considered it unsafe for him to stay, as so many people were moving about, and he left by the same mode as he entered. The next day he again effected an entrance in the same manner as on the previous night; and he went on to state that he remained in the Palace the whole of Tuesday night, the whole day on Wednesday, and up till one o'clock on Thursday morning, when he was discovered under a sofa in her Majesty's dressing-room, as above described. The prisoner pointed out all the passages and places he had gone through previous to his arrival at the room in which he was discovered, and there appears no reason to doubt his statement. The hiding place of the intruder was first discovered by one of her Majesty's pages, and when he was asked what brought him there, he replied, that he wanted to see what was going forward in the Palace, that he might write about it, and if he was discovered he should be as well off as Oxford, who fared better in Bedlam than he (prisoner) did out of it. He was also asked if, during the time he was in the Palace, he saw the Queen or the infant Princess, and he replied that he did not, but that he had heard a noise, which he thought came from her Majesty's room.

Her Majesty's page, who discovered the prisoner, and the constable who took him to the station-house, were then examined.

The Council came to the decision that, as no property or dangerous weapon was found on the prisoner, it would be better to inflict a summary punishment; and a warrant was accordingly made out, and signed by Mr. Hall, committing the prisoner to the House of Correction, Tothill Street, as a rogue and vagabond, for three months.

The prisoner was immediately afterwards conveyed in a cab to Tothill Street.

LATEST PARTICULARS.

The sensation caused by the late mysterious entrance of the boy Jones into Buckingham Palace, appears to be even greater than that produced by his apprehension in the same place in December, 1838. The object which prompted so daring a proceeding is still involved in the utmost doubt; but it was not probable that it was his intention to do any personal injury to her Majesty, for had such been his purpose abundant opportunities of carrying it into effect presented themselves during his concealment in the chamber where he was secured. From a well informed source, we have heard the sofa under which Jones was found is in the ante-room in which the Princess Royal and Mrs. Lilley, her Royal Highness's nurse, repose. On the night in question the latter had not long retired to rest ere she fancied she heard a noise similar to that likely to be caused by a person who was endeavouring to prevent his presence from being discovered, and was moving in a stealthy manner. Mrs. Lilley at first treated the matter as of no moment, thinking probably that the noise might have been imaginary. Its renewal, however, created an alarm, and she instantly summoned those of the attendants who were on guard in the adjoining ante-chamber. On their arrival the offender was quickly discovered and drawn from his place of hiding. The statement then goes on to say that her Majesty, who but three hours previously had been sitting on this particular sofa, having been disturbed by the confusion to which the event had given rise, called out and desired to be informed as to its cause. As an apprehension was, however, entertained that the sudden communication of the occurrence might be attended with an unfavourable effect on her Majesty, the attendants gave an evasive answer. The Queen repeated her command, and then the fact of the boy's concealment and subsequent apprehension were made known to her.

The circumstances at that time appeared not to produce any very visible effect on her Majesty, but on Thursday symptoms of other than a satisfactory character were apparent. It affords us the highest gratification to be able to add that a few hours of quietude tended to the restoration of her Majesty.

It would appear that there is now no doubt but that the account given by Jones as to his having effected his entrance into the Palace by scaling the garden wall from Constitution Hill is correct. Upon being asked whether he had not met some of the attendants in the course of his progress along the corridor and staircase, he replied, "Yes," but that, when he saw any one coming in his direction, he hid himself behind the pillars, or behind any piece of furniture which happened to be near. Hitherto he has been silent as to the motive which induced him to take so extraordinary a step as that of forcing his way a second time into the royal apartments, and when asked on Friday morning, after he had been upon the tread-wheel, how he liked his punishment, his answer was to the effect that he had got into the scrape, and must do the best he could.

There does not appear to be the slightest ground for the rumour that he is insane.

Many circumstances have transpired to show that Jones was in the Palace the whole of Wednesday. The delinquent states that during the day he secreted himself under different beds and in cupboards, until at last he obtained an entrance into the room in which he was discovered. Not much reliance can be placed in his statements, but, as such general curiosity exists on the subject, we may state that, in answer to interrogatories, he said, "that he had sat upon the throne, that he saw the Queen, and heard the Princess Royal cry."

Prince Albert was in the room with her Majesty taking leave for the night when the miscreant was discovered under the sofa.

The fellow's shoes were found in one of the rooms of the ground-floor. The sofa under which the boy was discovered, we understand, is one of most costly and magnificent material and workmanship, and ordered expressly for the accommodation of the royal and illustrious visitors who call to pay their respects to her Majesty.

ABOVE: One of the many catchpenny prints about the Boy Jones affair, reprinted from John Ashton's *Curiosities of Street Literature* (1871).

who gave the old man a Christmas present of 10 shillings. Thomas Jones trudged into Bairnsdale, bought some spirits, and lay down on the edge of the Mitchell River bridge, swigging from his bottle. Later the same afternoon, the semi-stupefied Jones rolled over the edge of the parapet and fell 12ft (3.7m), striking his head hard against a large stone and expiring shortly after. A few days later, the *Bairnsdale Advertiser* had a startling story to tell: the drunken old 'Thomas Jones' had once been the famous Boy Jones, of Buckingham Palace notoriety. Once upon a time, Jones had been apprenticed to the sweep who had the contract for sweeping the palace chimneys. On the occasion of the marriage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, the mischievous lad had decided to pay them a visit. He climbed down the chimney of the Queen's bedroom and hid underneath the bed. But before the arrival of the newlyweds, he was discovered and ignominiously dragged forth. Although when sober, Jones had been quite sensitive to any allusion to this sensational episode of his youth, several old acquaintances of his vouched for the story being nothing but the truth.

SCHIZOID PERSONALITIES AND EROTOMANIACS

Several authors have made more or less well-informed deductions about what was wrong with the Boy Jones. Did he suffer from schizophrenia? His own father, his employer Mr Griffiths, and many of the journalists who interviewed him during the days of his fame, all found him very odd. What was he writing, when he sat before the fire poring over his sheets of scrap paper, changing and correcting the text again and again – love letters to the Queen, chapters in his forthcoming book on Buckingham Palace, or just nonsense? Nobody will ever know, since the extraordinary Boy always ended his hour-long writing sessions by throwing everything he had written into the fire. Like the majority

VICTORIAN STALKERS

The Boy Jones was not the only man to land in English courtrooms for pursuing an unwilling object of desire...

Although stalking is regarded by most as a modern problem, the annals of stalker-like behaviour stretch far back in time. A most audacious and persistent stalker, and a contemporary of the Boy Jones, was the Irish barrister Richard Dunn. In 1838, when staying at Harrogate, Dunn met the 24-year-old Miss Angela Burdett Coutts (below). The year before, she had inherited her grandfather's fortune of nearly two million pounds, making her the wealthiest woman in England. Although Dunn was a middle-aged man, he fell passionately in love with her, and believed his feelings were reciprocated. This was far from being true, however, since the prim young lady found him both forward and uncouth. After he had written her some very indecent letters, her father called in the police and Dunn was imprisoned in York Castle.

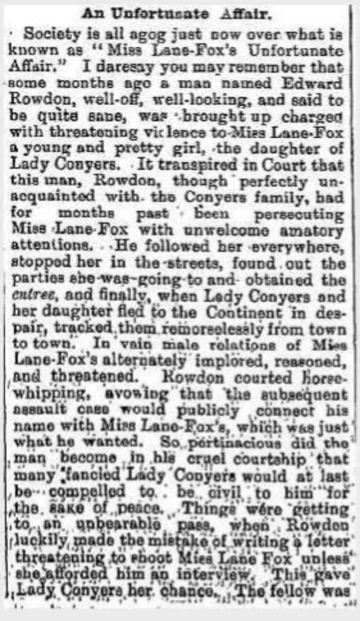
In December 1838, Miss Coutts was back in London, and so was Richard Dunn. Having some private means, he could afford to be a full-time stalker, and since he daily became more impertinent, the young lady feared for her life. Her father again called in the police, who posted a constable by the Burdett front door, and warned Dunn about his conduct. But since the stalker did not relent, he was arrested, brought before the Bow Street magistrates, and held in Tothill Fields Prison. Dunn bragged that he was not yet done with the wealthy heiress, and that he would marry her one day. It is not known whether another prisoner, a short and dirty boy, whistled nonchalantly when he heard the Irishman's braggadocio, before exclaiming "Pooh! That's nothing! Now hear who *I* have set my sights on..."

Emerging from Tothill Fields in early 1839, Dunn was certainly not done

with Miss Coutts. In June 1840, he was pursuing Angela and her friend Miss Meredith along Hanover Terrace, near Regent's Park. Seeing that the two ladies were quite frightened, a homeowner interceded, letting them into his house and refusing to admit the persistent Dunn. In 1841, Dunn was imprisoned in Newgate for perjury, trespass and failure to pay his bail, and he would remain there until 1846. Later, he developed the idea that Angela had promised him her hand in marriage, and £100,000 as well. He was again prosecuted for perjury, ending up in Newgate for another 18 months. In August 1853, he was in the Insolvent Debtor's Court. Although he read out some poems, which he called "Sparks from Miss Angela's heart", he was sentenced to 10 months in jail. With much feeling, Dunn screamed that he wanted to die, and that he hoped that his gravestone would bear the inscription "Murdered by Miss Angela Burdett Coutts".

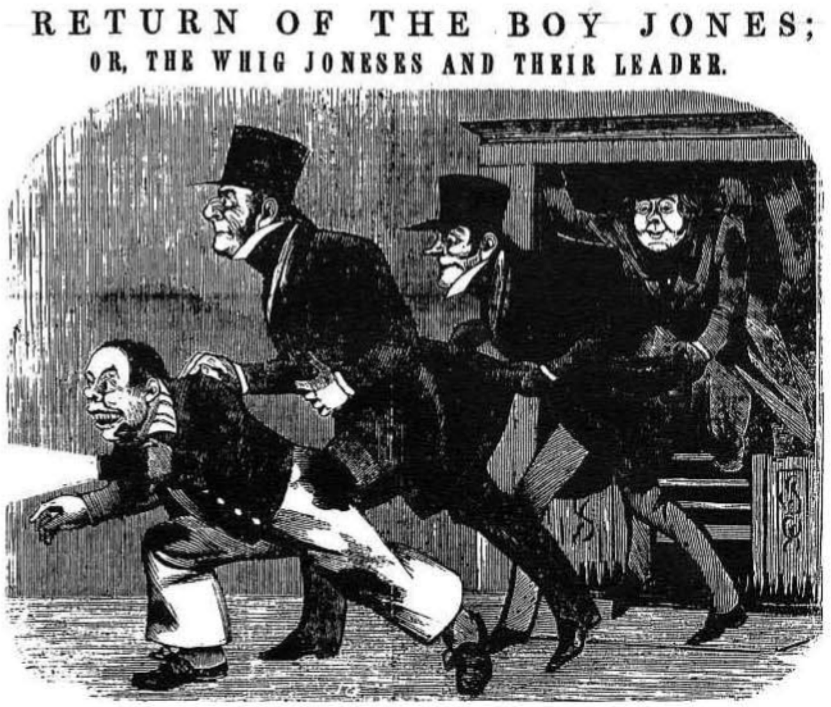
In 1856, this demented stalker was still active, however, although the subject of his perverted affection had changed: Dunn was now obsessed with the 23-year-old Princess Mary of Cambridge. Perhaps he thought Angela Burdett Coutts, now 42, had become too old for him, or perhaps he wanted to emulate his former prison-mate, the Boy Jones, and go after royalty. He was promptly arrested, and some of his indecent letters to Princess Mary were read aloud in court. Two experienced doctors declared that he was labouring under delusions. The verdict was that he was of unsound mind and should be placed under restraint in an asylum.

In 1883, unemployed solicitor Edward Rowdon became infatuated with the young heiress Violet Lane-Fox. Although both Miss Lane-Fox and her mother Lady Conyers made it clear that she wanted nothing to do with Rowdon, who was nearly twice her age, he relentlessly followed her around. Lady Conyers



An Unfortunate Affair.

Society is all agog just now over what is known as "Miss Lane-Fox's Unfortunate Affair." I daresay you may remember that some months ago a man named Edward Rowdon, well-off, well-looking, and said to be quite sane, was brought up charged with threatening violence to Miss Lane-Fox a young and pretty girl, the daughter of Lady Conyers. It transpired in Court that this man, Rowdon, though perfectly unacquainted with the Conyers family, had for months past been persecuting Miss Lane-Fox with unwelcome amatory attentions. He followed her everywhere, stopped her in the streets, found out the parties she was going to and obtained the *entree*, and finally, when Lady Conyers and her daughter fled to the Continent in despair, tracked them remorselessly from town to town. In vain male relations of Miss Lane-Fox's alternately implored, reasoned, and threatened. Rowdon courted horsewhipping, avowing that the subsequent assault case would publicly connect his name with Miss Lane-Fox's, which was just what he wanted. So pertinacious did the man become in his cruel courtship that many fancied Lady Conyers would at last be compelled to be civil to him for the sake of peace. Things were getting to an unbearable pass, when Rowdon luckily made the mistake of writing a letter threatening to shoot Miss Lane Fox unless she afforded him an interview. This gave Lady Conyers her chance. The fellow was



RETURN OF THE BOY JONES;
OR, THE WHIG JONESES AND THEIR LEADER.

ABOVE: This cartoon from the *Penny Satirist*, 5 November 1842, has the Boy leading Lord Melbourne and his Whig ministers back into the palace. This is said to show a good likeness of the Boy.

of schizophrenics, the Boy Jones was a loner; he had no friends, no confidante even among his own siblings. A gloomy, solitary figure, brooding and secretive, he showed no respect or affection even for his long-suffering parents.

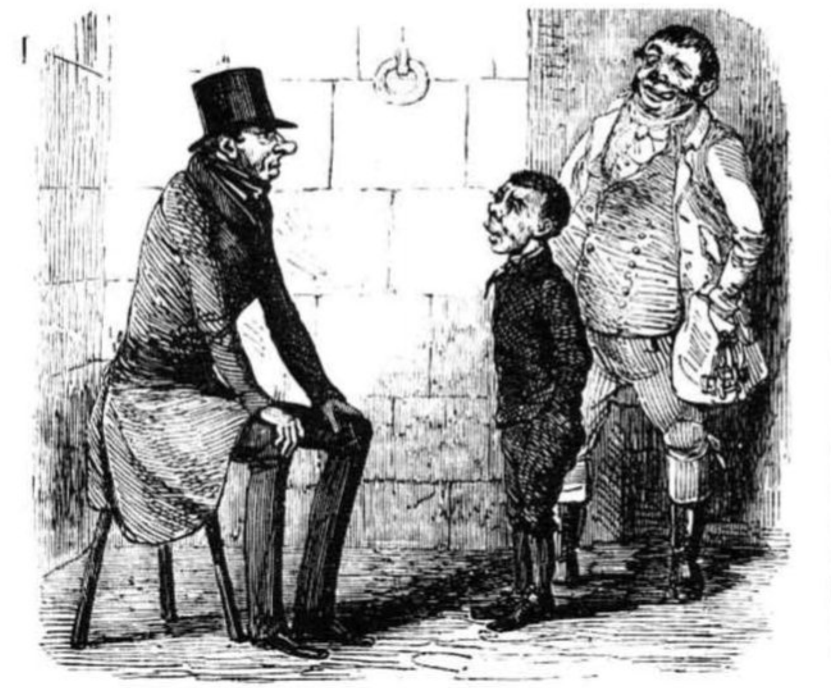
But to qualify as a schizophrenic, the individual has to suffer from some kind of delusions and/or hallucinations. There is no evidence that the Boy Jones ever suffered from either. His father, and most of the journalists who met him, considered him fully sane, although profoundly odd in his intellect and manners. Two experienced doctors who examined the Boy in December 1840 did not declare him insane, although they must have been under considerable pressure from the Government to do so. Had they given way to this pressure, the Boy Jones would have put into Bedlam for a very considerable period of time.

There is a condition known as a schizoid personality, where the individual is strikingly withdrawn and solitary, emotionally cold, and lacking interest in social relationships. Such individuals do not fulfil the criteria for schizophrenia and may well have a normal intelligence. Many of them have odd ideas and compulsions, are proud and reserved, and appear to be indolent, absent-minded and engrossed in fantasy. As mentioned above, the Boy Jones had a thorough aversion to menial work. Mr Griffiths said he was of a "proud and ambitious turn of mind, never thinking anything good enough". Although it is, of course, speculative to attach a psychiatric diagnosis to an individual who has been dead for more than 100 years, and whose character is preserved only in the words of others, this description fits the gloomy, solitary Boy Jones rather well.

Individuals with a schizoid personality disorder may have secret voyeuristic interests, or even develop erotomania, also known as de Clérambault's syndrome. The shy, introverted patient, who is often an unattractive loner, develops a fixation on some person of the opposite sex, often someone of a much higher position in society. The patient develops a delusion that this stranger returns his feelings, and begins pestering him or her with unwanted letters and presents, or becomes a stalker, following the loved one from a distance, even breaking into his or her house.

A contemporary of the Boy Jones, the French psychiatrist Jean-Etienne Esquirol, described the curious case of an unattached 36-year-old man of melancholy disposition and unprepossessing appearance, who fell desperately in love with a beautiful actress. He tried to communicate with her, approached her repeatedly, and loitered outside the theatre and outside her house. Although she made it clear she wanted nothing to do with him, and her husband once beat him up badly enough to put him in hospital, he continued to stalk her. When the forthright Esquirol asked him how he could possibly believe she had any interest in an ugly, penniless nobody such as himself, the deluded Frenchman replied: "All that is true, but love does not reason, and I have seen enough to leave me in no doubt that I am loved."

In 1920, psychiatrist Gaetan de Clérambault described another case of erotomania. A 53-year-old French milliner developed the *idée fixe* that George V was in love with her. All London knew of their affair and wanted it to succeed, she believed. She spent large sums of money travelling to England, where she prowled around the royal palaces, although the corpulent, middle-aged Frenchwoman could not repeat the heroics of the Boy Jones in order to meet her beloved monarch in the flesh.



OLD HARRY'S VISIT TO JONES, IN SEARCH OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE.

“ Now, my lad, just inform me how you managed to *get in*, for that's the very *thing I want to do!*'

‘ Vy, yer see, my Lord, I can't wery well do that, 'cos I means to go back again ven I gets out o' quod.'

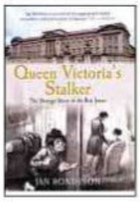
ABOVE: This caricature from *The Odd Fellow*, 24 April 1841, depicts “the Boy” being sought for advice by politician “Old Harry” Brougham. Jones himself may have been drawn from life.

INTIMACY SEEKERS

Stalking is a serious problem in present-day society. A large number of stalkers are intimacy-seekers, who develop an obsession with some person and a desire to get to know him or her better. Some of them choose humble victims: the secretary falls for her office manager, the repressed spinster working for the local charity becomes obsessed with the vicar, or the unemployed young loner becomes infatuated with his social worker. Other intimacy-seekers have higher ambitions: they become celebrity-stalkers. There is a strong association between this group and the erotomaniacs. There are many modern cases of patients with erotomania stalking celebrities. Brad Pitt, Madonna, Jodie Foster, David Letterman and former President Bill Clinton all had their own stalkers.

There are several obvious similarities between these cases of intimacy-seeking, erotomanic stalkers and the Boy Jones – but there are also differences. Firstly, the Boy seems to have been obsessed both by the glories of Buckingham Palace in general and by the Queen herself in particular. Although he sneaked into her private apartments at least twice, once stole her underwear, and another time spied on her from underneath a sofa in her dressing-room, there is no evidence he tried to follow her around, or to break into Windsor Castle as well. Secondly, although stalking behaviour has been observed in adolescents, it is usually on a local or domestic level. There are very few, if any, examples of young teenagers becoming celebrity stalkers and breaking into their victim's houses. The medico-legal and psychiatric literature is unable to come up with anything even resembling a 14-year-old Boy stalking a 19-year-old Queen. The conclusion must be that in spite of the advances in criminology and psychiatry, the Boy Jones remains unique and unclassifiable.

The cases of the Boy Jones, Richard Dunn and other Victorian stalkers (see panel) clearly demonstrate that stalking is not a modern phenomenon, rather a new categorisation of a form of aberrant human behaviour that has been around for centuries. There are clear parallels between the Boy Jones, the Frenchwoman who was in love with George V, and that other, more recent palace intruder, Michael Fagan. The demented Richard Dunn, who stalked Angela Burdett-Coutts for 15 years before turning his attentions to Princess Mary of Cambridge, was a 19th-century kindred spirit to the sinister Margaret Mary Ray, who stalked David Letterman and the astronaut Story Musgrove.



This is an edited extract from Jan Bondeson's book *Queen Victoria's Stalker* (Amberley Publishing, Stroud, 2010). £16.99.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Dr JAN BONDESON is a senior lecturer and consultant rheumatologist, and a frequent *FT* contributor. His *Amazing Dogs: A Cabinet of Canine Curiosities* and *Greyfriars Bobby: The Most Faithful Dog in The World* are due out soon.

took her daughter to Europe to escape Rowdon, but he followed them there, behaving as obnoxiously as ever. In the end, the stalker was unwise enough to write a letter to Miss Lane-Fox, threatening to shoot her unless she agreed to meet him in private. This gave Lady Conyers the opportunity to prosecute him. In September 1885, Rowdon was sentenced to six months in prison. Once released, Rowdon started following Miss Lane-Fox once more. When he optimistically inserted an advertisement in the *Morning Post*, announcing his impending marriage to Miss Lane-Fox, Lady Conyers and her solicitors struck again: in June 1886, the stalker was prosecuted for criminal libel, and sentenced to 18 months in prison. The judge called him an unmanly scoundrel, and was sorry he could not add hard labour to the sentence. Still, this harsh sentence seems to have had the desired effect, since nothing was heard about Rowdon annoying Lady Conyers or Miss Lane-Fox again.

In 1890, the aspiring young actress Louisa Pounds began studying at Gunn's Metropolitan School of Shorthand. One of the other students, unemployed clerk Alexander Edwin Sharpe, was very much taken with her good looks. He followed her around, tried to be alone with her, and made some very impertinent suggestions. After Miss Pounds had complained to the headmaster, Sharpe was dismissed from the school, but kept following Miss Pounds and wrote her some disagreeable letters. In one of these, he threatened to shoot her. When Miss Pounds and her friend Mr Gunn came to challenge the demented Sharpe, he pulled out a revolver and screamed “I will either blow out your brains, or my own!” Being seriously frightened of what her sinister ‘admirer’ might be capable of, Louisa Pounds went to the police, and in November 1890, Sharpe was arrested, charged with threatening to murder Miss Pounds and sentenced to a year in prison.

Emerging from his sentence as mean-spirited as ever, Sharpe was dismayed to see that his victim's career had blossomed: under the stage name Louie Pounds, she was now a celebrated actress at the Prince of Wales Theatre. In March and April 1892, she several times saw her stalker's ugly face grinning at her from the theatre audience, and received some threatening letters from him. After he had threatened to disfigure her using vitriol, Sharpe was again taken to court; his family's suggestion that he should be given a one-way ticket to Brazil was acted upon, and Louie Pounds was free from her stalker. She went on to become quite a famous actress, active until the 1930s, and living to be nearly 100. It is not known whether Sharpe found any Brazilian ladies to stalk after being ‘transported’ to South America.

FBI FORTEAN BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

111. Viktor Wynd and his Little Shop of Horrors

RICHARD FREEMAN finds a modern-day cabinet of curiosities in the unlikeliest of locations. Photos by **ETIENNE GILFILLAN.**

I'm an old fashioned cove at heart and generally believe that things were much better in the past. My taste in museums is no exception. To me, a museum should be an Aladdin's cave of wonder and discovery – exotic specimens staring out from behind glass, queer objects of obscure purpose on display for their own intrinsic interest. The setting is as important as the collection it contains. A museum doesn't feel like a museum unless it's *old*.

There's been a disheartening trend in modern museums for a clinical whiteness more familiar in hospitals. Stuffed animals and historic esoterica give way to interactive computer displays and Disneyesque animatronics. Fortunately, there are a handful of more individualistic museums that buck this trend – the Natural History Museum at Tring and the wonderful little museum at Illfracombe, Devon, are two that spring to mind. The greatest of all, of course, was the late, lamented Potter's Museum of Curiosities. Unique, in so much as its main purpose was to entertain rather than educate, this collection of Victorian whimsy is best remembered for its tableaux of stuffed animals variously playing cricket, getting married, sitting in schoolrooms and playing on swings. However, it was the other items that caught my interest: the preserved head of a man-eating crocodile from India displayed next to a model church made entirely from feathers, that in turn sat next to a Maori battle-axe. None of the objects were obviously connected, but all were fascinating.

The museum closed for good in 2003 and the collection was broken up and sold for a total of £500,000 (see **FT168:10–11; 177:4–6; 270:5**). It was a dark day in the history of museums. One can't help but feel that had Potter's been a collection of unmade beds or empty rooms with the lights going on and off, there would have been a huge outcry from Britain's chattering classes and a serious bid to save the collection. As it was, Potter's treasures were cast to the four winds with little fanfare or media attention.

THE LAST TUESDAY SOCIETY

TOP: The museum/shop's exterior in Hackney.

ABOVE: Skull exhibit.

After years of lamenting the passing of Potter's, I heard of something remarkably like it existing in the unlikely location of Hackney, east London. Apparently, it was a collection of wonderful and esoteric objects displayed in a building that served as both a museum and a shop. I had to investigate.

The Little Shop of Horrors is located at 11 Mare Street, London E8. The shop front (The Last Tuesday Society) looks fairly normal from a distance; it's only after you've opened the door that this changes. Even before the museum proper is reached, a cornucopia of the curious explodes into the visitor's vision. Stuffed fruit bats dangle from the ceiling, and the room is dominated by the vast, impressive fossilised skull of an auroch, a gigantic, extinct species of cattle. Other treats include a stuffed mermaid (possibly a Japanese *Ningyo*), preserved crows and rats in various poses and accurate, life-sized models of sea pigs (genus *Scotoplanes*).

A flight of stairs leads the visitor down into what might just be the most wonderful collection of strange objects ever assembled under one roof, the modern equivalent of some 17th-century *kunstkammer*, a collection of objects assembled at a whim on the basis of their æsthetic or historical appeal with little to link one wonder to another and no attempt at explanation. The objects are assembled simply for their own intrinsic interest or grotesque appeal.

The Little Shop is the brainchild of collector and proprietor Viktor Wynd, and this was precisely his intention: "I wanted to see how a contemporary *wunderkammer* might look," he says. Was it meant to be a sort of successor to the late, lamented Potter's Museum of Curiosities?

"I think we're more of an *homage* to childhood memories of the Pitt Rivers, the Horniman Museum and the John Soane Museum," he says, "Although in my mind it's really a miniature version of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, or Peter the Great's cabinet of curiosities."

So we find a collection of skulls from the victims of Dayak head hunters in Borneo, some dating back to the 12th century. The oldest human skull in the shop is a partially fossilised 10,000-year-old specimen from Papua New Guinea, with a section missing where the fatal axe met the bone.

Just as impressive is one of only two shrunken heads of a Caucasian in Europe. No one knows who the moustachioed white man was, a missionary or an explorer, but he met his end in Ecuador over 100 years ago. Now his scalp and face, shrunken with hot sand, sit in a jar, eyes and mouth sewn shut.

The World's Longest Standing
-ERECTION-
The mummified penis of a man
hung in the 18th Century..
Available to rent by the hour -

ABOVE: Exhibits include the erect penis of a hanged man (top left), squirrels from the Potter Museum, a two-headed conjoined twin skeleton and many other rarities, macabre skull-and-bones and other anatomical preservations.

Many of the exhibits remind us of our own mortality – perhaps none more so than the preserved erect penis of a man hanged 300 years ago.

For me, as a cryptozoologist, the leg bones of a dodo formed one of the most interesting exhibits. Viktor kindly allowed me to hold one of these precious items. It's shocking to realise that not only did mankind wipe out the dodo in less than a century, but not a single preserved specimen exists – all we have are fragments. No wonder the poor creature has become synonymous with extinction.

Other highlights include the skeleton of infant Siamese twins, a six-legged lamb (rescued from the Potter's carve-up) and a box reputed to contain some of the original darkness that Moses called down upon the Earth (nailed tightly shut, I'm glad to say).

Strange conjunctions abound: mediæval bells from Albania sit next to a box of condoms used by the Rolling Stones (one hopes that only unused ones remain); fossil mammoth teeth lie alongside tomes with comically lewd titles such as *Sex Tips for Irish Farmers* and *The Big Book of Lesbian Horse Stories.*

I love this sense of quite heterogeneous objects being placed together, which harks back to a more eccentric age of museums; why, I ask Viktor, is it now so rare to find collections displayed in this way?

"Every generation looks for a different narrative and assembles objects in a different way to tell a different story," he says. "The people who run public museums are dull, boring, ordinary people living dull, boring lives; institutionally they have to be, in order to justify their worth to ever more distant quangos of like-minded people, and thus they like the narratives to reflect their own lives."

As well as the Little Shop of Horrors, Viktor Wynd is also the man behind The Last Tuesday Society, which puts on talks and throws decadent masques and parties. "It's a pataphysical organisation founded by William James at Harvard in 1878 and seeks to create a more beautiful, interesting world," he tells me. Membership is by invitation only, "but if you come to some of our events and meet other members and get on with them then you may be invited to join."

The hour or so I'd set aside to visit the Little Shop of Horrors proved hopelessly inadequate. One could probably drop in a hundred times and always find something new and enthralling, and I'd urge all fellow forteans to make a pilgrimage to this wonderful collection. Amazingly, the Little Shop of Horrors is just that – a shop as well as a museum. Most of the items are for sale, although I didn't enquire as to the prices; no doubt, they would be well beyond the meagre budget of a monster-hunter!

But isn't it a wrench to let these treasures go? I asked Viktor.

"They're all my children really, so, yes, it's sad – but in a way I'm happy to see them getting married. Some of them I love too much to ever part with, but I'm feeding my collecting habit – things need to go so I can acquire more. Come back in 50 years and see what we have then…" **FT**

http://viktorwyndofhackney.co.uk/
http://www.thelasttuesdaysociety.org/
Little Shop of Horrors, 11 Mare Street, London E8.

Former zookeeper **RICHARD FREEMAN** is Zoological Director of the Centre For Fortean Zoology and a frequent contributor to *Fortean Times.*

The Quest for Otto Rahn

Part Two: The Court of Lucifer

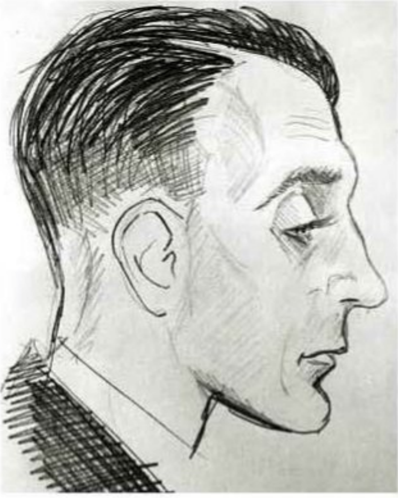
Who was the mystery man who caused Heinrich Himmler's team of crack SS archæologists to seek the Holy Grail and other legendary relics? In the second of two articles, **RICHARD STANLEY** investigates the life of SS Obersturmführer Otto Rahn and his downfall under the Nazi regime.

In early autumn 1934, a young esoteric scholar named Otto Wilhelm Rahn (pictured at right in a 1936 portrait), who had spent much of his adult life hot on the trail of the most sacred relic in all Christendom – the Holy Grail – came to the attention of the Ahnenerbe SS's archæological department and was urgently summoned to Berlin to meet Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, who wished to strike a bargain with him. Otto's pursuit of the treasure of the ages had already taken him from the forests of his native Germany and the Tyrolean Alps to the unexplored caverns and mountaintop castles of southern France. As he was ushered into the presence of the feared leader of the black order, he must have thought his hour had come at last and that all those years of meticulous research and obsessive fieldwork were about to pay off…

THE SECRET KING OF GERMANY

Otto's first book, *Crusade Against the Grail* (1934) had attempted to link Wolfram von Eschenbach's troubadour epic *Parzival* with the brutal repression of the European Gnostic-pagan tradition by the forces of the Holy Roman Church, a subject dear to Himmler's heart. The book had been read by a young SS driver-secretary, Gabrielle Winckler-Dechend, who gave a copy to her superior, the ageing rune mage Colonel Karl Maria Wiligut-Weisthor, then the head of Section VIII (Archives) at the Race and Settlement Main Office, who passed it on to the Reichsführer SS.

> Rahn had spent most of his adult life hot on the trail of the Holy Grail



Wiligut-Weisthor (see **FT196:37**) was one of the most bizarre and colourful figures to have been drawn to the black flame of Himmler's Nazi Camelot. Born as Karl Maria Wiligut in Vienna in 1866, he believed himself to be the "secret king of Germany", the last descendant of an extinct line of royalty stemming from the ancient Germanic sages, the Uiligotis of the *Asa-Uana-Sippe*. He not only claimed to have been tutored in the runes and initiated from an early age into the secrets of his family, but also to possess clairvoyant abilities. By faith he was an Irminist, an adherent of the pagan deity Krist, whose worship he believed had been hijacked and ruthlessly distorted by the Christians. Following a family tradition, he had joined the Austro-Hungarian army at the age of 14 and held a series of commands spanning 40 years of loyal military service. He was repeatedly decorated for bravery in WWI and after being demobbed seems to have developed the conviction that he could remember all of his past lives, experiencing total recall of over 8,000 years of Germanic history. His subsequent desire to father a son who might inherit his ancestral memories placed his marriage under considerable strain.

Wiligut blamed his wife's inability to

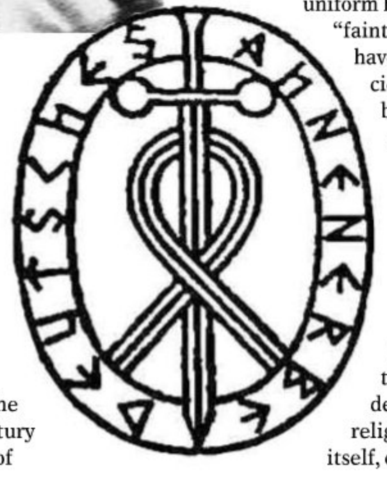
GETTY IMAGES / AFP

ABOVE: Himmler had the ear of Adolf Hitler, although his occult interests would set him apart from the rest of the Führer's inner circle. **BELOW:** Karl Maria Wiligut-Weisthor, who took an interest in Otto's *Crusade against the Grail*, passing a copy on to Himmler. **BOTTOM:** The symbol of the Ahnenerbe SS.

conceive a healthy boy child on a Zionist-Masonic-Catholic conspiracy, which he also believed was responsible for the collapse of the Habsburg dynasty and his homeland's ignominious defeat in the war. He began to grow increasingly violent, and after repeatedly threatening to kill his wife he was confined to an asylum in Salzburg and diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic with megalomaniacal tendencies. On his release, he emigrated to Germany, where he rapidly became a celebrity among the *völkisch* groups of the day, such as the Free Sons of the North and Baltic Seas and the Edda Society. In 1933, his old friend Richard Anders, who was now serving as an SS officer, introduced him to Heinrich Himmler, whose growing fascination with the occult traditions of old Europe set him apart from the other, more pragmatic members of Hitler's inner circle. Himmler was labouring under the apprehension that he was the reincarnation of King Heinrich of Saxony at the time and seems to have been deeply impressed by this weird old man, who was duly recruited into the SS under the pseudonym 'Weisthor' (literally 'Thor, the wise warrior') and installed as the head of a newly created Department for Pre and Early History within the Race and Settlement Main Office in Munich.

There is no doubt that Wiligut-Weisthor, dubbed "Himmler's Rasputin" by popular historians, was seen as something of a mentor figure by the Reichsführer and accordingly came to wield considerable influence within the Order. He was rapidly promoted from the rank of SS-Hauptsturmführer (captain) to SS-Brigadeführer (Brigadier), proving instrumental not only in the design of the SS uniform and 'Totenkopfring' (death's head ring) which bore his family seal, but in the purchase and restoration of the Schloss Wewelsburg to serve as the SS Order castle (see **FT196:32–39**). The former seat of the 16th-century bishops and witch-hunters of Paderborn, with its round table and ritual chamber in the basement of the north-facing tower, was clearly intended to become both the headquarters of Himmler's nascent warrior knight dynasty and the geographic centre of a New World Order, over whose quasi-pagan birth rites Wiligut-Weisthor presided like some deranged cross between a Nazi Aleister Crowley and Uncle Fester from *The Addams Family*.

It comes as little surprise that Wiligut-Weisthor adored Otto's book, which was swiftly prescribed as required reading at a certain level of promotion within the SS. After a complex vetting process, Otto was recruited onto Himmler's personal staff as a junior non-commissioned officer, becoming a full member of the SS in 1936. Although he was never a card-carrying member of the Nazi party and found the uniform he was forced to wear "faintly ridiculous", he must have been elated that sufficient funding had finally been allocated for him to be able to continue his research in France, Italy and Iceland. Like Wiligut-Weisthor, he saw the rise of the Hitler dictatorship as a means to an end, a golden opportunity to avenge his ancestors and oversee the destruction of organised religion, even Christianity itself, clearing the way for



a new pan-European paganism designed and directed by his black-garbed masters, whom he imagined to be the servitors of an unknown god whose messiah was Lucifer rather than Jesus.

TO HELL AND BEYOND...

Otto was only too aware of the Faustian nature of the bargain he had accepted and indeed paraphrases Goethe at length in his second book, *The Court of Lucifer* (Schwarzhaupter Verlag, Leipzig, 1937):

"Give me your hand, Faust! Let us leave Rome and seek out together the mountain of assembly in the most distant midnight... I was looking for divinity and instead I find myself at the gates of Hell. But still I may continue to walk, to fall, even in flames – If there exists a way towards Heaven then it crosses Hell, at least it does for me! Well then, I dare!"

Knowing that to refuse such an offer from Himmler would be to run the risk of possible imprisonment or even execution, Otto threw himself instead into the continued pursuit of the mysterious Cathar treasure he believed to be the Grail, communicating his findings to Weisthor in coded dispatches that were to be shared with no one other than Himmler, so secret were their contents. In one message addressed to Weisthor in October 1935 and signed by Otto with a hearty "heil Hitler", the young Grail historian requests permission to travel to Odenwald, Westerwald, Sporkenburg, Drutgerestein, Steimel, Hellenborn, Wilderstein and the ruins of Wildenborg castle near Amorbach, where Wolfram von Eschenbach first penned his epic Grail romance. In the same missive, Otto mentions his pressing need to visit the stone circles of Dornburg and Willnesdorf, the former seat of the German heretics and birthplace of the mythical Christian Rosenkreutz, along with several other locations so secret that they could "only be mentioned orally". The subsequent journey is noted in a report to Himmler dated 19 October 1935, and Himmler's journal for 3 November 1935 remarks: "Report back and to be kept secret."

There was always the implication that the Grail had a tangible presence in the real world

These must have been heady years for Otto, and by all accounts he travelled incessantly. He planned to collaborate with the composer Hans Pfitzner to write a new opera telling the tale of the Cathars, and in July 1936 embarked on his most ambitious excursion to date, setting sail with a team of fellow SS men for the Arctic circle. Women were not allowed on the ship, which apparently flew a mysterious blue swastika rather than the familiar black and red sigil of Hitler's Reich. This voyage to the far north, the Ultima Thule of his ancestors, was to form the final passage in *The Court of Lucifer*, a rather insubstantial travelogue thrown together under the ægis of his Nazi supervisors and delivered just in time for an arbitrarily chosen deadline of 31 October – the pagan festival of Samhain. Typically, Otto's text is less than clear about the true purpose of his journey, and speculation has been rife over the years as to whether he had hoped to find vestiges of some lost Aryan homeland hidden beneath the ice mantle, a gateway to the 'Hollow Earth' or was simply taking part in an obscure bonding exercise based on the Eddas.

In 2006, I had the opportunity to retrace Otto's steps to Laugarvatin, Reykholt and the desolate shores of the Greenland Sea where the trail finally petered out. On the verge of a subterranean lake deep beneath the steaming flanks of Mount Kufla, I saw curious pictoglyphs and queer, Elfin faces carved into the volcanic rock, possibly the visible signs of a long-vanished civilisation. Whether or not they constituted material proof of Otto's claims or were merely vestiges of another elaborate hoax is impossible to say without recourse to carbon-dating or further academic investigation. One of the things that always intrigued me about Otto's case, and kept me on the trail over the years, was the odd physicality of his quest. Rather than a metaphor or spiritual ideal, there was always the implication that his Grail had a tangible presence

RICHARD STANLEY

TOP: The Nazi Arctic expedition of 1936.
LEFT: The author retraces Otto's steps to Iceland in 2006.

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ABOVE: The crypt of Himmler's Nazi Camelot at Wewelsburg Castle, Paderborn. Perhaps he envisaged his SS elite conducting their rituals in this very space, with the Grail at the centre... once Otto had delivered it into the hands of the black order.

in the material world. In his work, he often refers to the sacred treasure as the stone that fell from Lucifer's crown, an actual meteoric stone that fell from the sky. I had two of these alien artefacts in my possession, souvenirs of Otto's earlier excavations in the grotto of Fontanet, but still failed to understand what the young SS officer had hoped to achieve here, in this wilderness of lava and broken scree at the uttermost end of the Earth. He had planned to join the dots in his third book, *Orpheus – a Journey to Hell and Beyond*, a magnum opus whose first pages were written at the Icelandic North Cape on the Arctic Polar Circle. While the text of this exegesis was apparently completed on his return to Germany, it was, sadly, never to see print and the original manuscript seems to have disappeared without a trace.

TOWARD THE PRECIPICE

Quite what went wrong for Otto remains a matter of speculation, although perhaps the Grail-obsessed Reichsführer SS was not well pleased with his Grail-hunter's inability to come up with concrete results. As Himmler encountered difficulties in finding hard evidence to support his Aryan theories, so he began to grow increasingly impatient with Otto. After a brief promotional tour during which he visited schools and town halls to lecture a baffled public on the "Lucifer problem", Otto found himself posted to more conventional duties.

According to author Christian Bernadac, Otto was forced to participate in the Nazi breeding programme known as the *lebensborn* (in which 'racially pure' women were encouraged to have children secretly fathered by SS officers) before being enrolled into a gruelling exercise regime at Buchenwald designed to "toughen him up" for active military service. On 1 September 1937, Otto was implicated in a disciplinary hearing held for one of his black-garbed comrades, Karl Mahler of Arolsen, who was accused, in an investigation backed by Martin Bormann's private office, of "dishonourable conduct". Bormann's staff were engaged in gathering data to discredit the SS, which was threatening to become a virtual state within a state. It is hard to know at this distance what Otto's role might have been in this infraction, whether it involved mistreatment of the prisoners or alleged homosexuality, as Reich historian Hans Jurgen Lange suggests. In a signed declaration, Otto was forced to swear off alcohol for two years and, as punishment, was stripped of his rank and reassigned to guard duty at the concentration camp at Dachau.

The issue of Otto's sexual orientation is still hotly disputed. His former publisher, Albert von Haller, told me that Otto had been openly gay and insisted, perhaps a little too stridently, that this had been the true cause of his downfall. Weisthor's former secretary Gabrielle Winckler-Dechend, on the other hand, seemed to go out of her way to refute the allegations. She recalled the time she had spent with Otto at the Race and Settlement Office fondly, claiming that he had often flirted with her. It may be necessary to take her testimony with a pinch of salt, however, as she also maintained that Otto had been gifted with 'second sight' – inherited from his father – and had communicated with her telepathically from across the street one night on the way home from a screening of Ernst Schäfer's SS-produced documentary *Geheimnis Tibet* ('Secret Tibet'; see **FT175:30–39**) as proof of his abilities to duplicate the powers of the lamas. Unfortunately for Gabrielle's claims, *Geheimnis Tibet* only premiered in 1942, some three years after Otto's disappearance and alleged demise. Gabriella refused to believe that Himmler could ever have done anything to harm Otto, whom she insisted had remained an ardent supporter of the black order to the end. Furthermore, she claimed that Otto had spoken of Dachau only in the most glowing terms and during his time there had paid particular attention to the planting of an extensive herb garden. Otto had a keen interest in naturopathy and herb lore and, according to Gabrielle, had seen his tour of duty in the camp as a chance to both creatively utilise the labour force and re-educate the prisoners.

Dachau at this time was filled with German 'political' prisoners (i.e., opponents of the Nazi regime); this only changed after *Kristallnacht*, 9 November 1938, when the genocidal persecution of the German Jews began in earnest. Despite Gabrielle's claims to the contrary, what Otto saw and experienced in the camp left him chronically depressed. He wrote repeatedly to Himmler's personal adjutant, Karl Wolff, asking to be released from his duties so that he might complete his third book, but by now he had lost the ear of the Reichsführer and his requests were ignored. His disillusionment with the Nazi regime became complete when he was asked to submit his '*Ahnenpass*', the grotesque genealogical document that all German citizens were required to fill out in order to prove their racial purity. Possibly Otto was unaware of his mother's Jewish roots until he conducted the necessary research to complete the form, but the irony would not have escaped him that his cherished lifework had served to contribute to the ideological underpinnings of the holocaust that was even now bearing down on him and the old, pre-war world he held so dear. For Otto Rahn, the initiatory journey ended in a precipice.

Curiously, I have a copy of Otto's *Ahnenpass* in my possession, and it is evident that, while he filled out the form, it was never stamped or approved. Quite how it ended up on file amongst the other public records remains a mystery. Certainly, to have submitted such a document, containing clear proof of his Semitic ancestry, would have been tantamount to suicide. After a reportedly staged marriage, to a young divorcée from Luneberg named Asta Bach, failed to 'rehabilitate' Otto in the eyes of his superiors, he was left with no other choice other than to resign from the SS. "It is no longer possible," he wrote, "to live in the country that my homeland has become. On my return to Munich it all came back to me. The bloody events to which I had borne witness. I could no longer sleep nor eat. It was as if a nightmare lay upon me…" In a handwritten memo addressed to Karl Wolff and dated 28 February 1939, Otto asked to be allowed to leave the SS for "*reasons so serious they can only be communicated orally*". His discharge was granted by Himmler on 17 March. The Reichsführer pencilled a single word in the margin – "*Ja*" – before initialling the request, which was backdated to 22 February – although by then Otto Rahn was in all likelihood already dead.

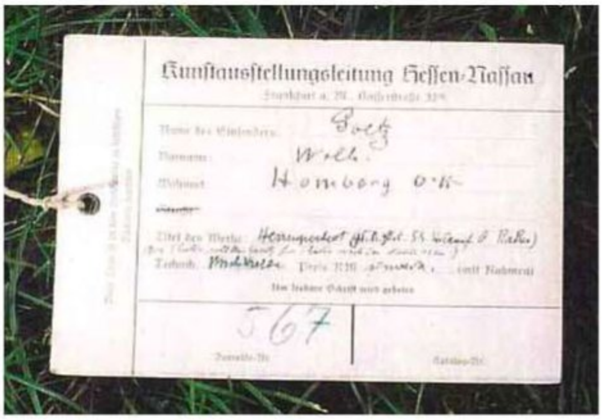
NO FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW

The testimony of Otto's two publishers only serves further to muddy the picture of his final days. The publisher of *The Court of Lucifer*, Albert von Haller, reports having last seen Otto in Dortmund in early March at the home of writer friend and fellow Luciferian, Kurt Eggars. Albert was in no doubt that Otto was now on the run from the SS. "He looked terrible. His hair and his clothes were a mess," he told me, claiming that he considered lending Otto his passport so that he might escape to France. Kurt supposedly advised him against this harebrained and somewhat unlikely course of action, warning that Otto was already under surveillance and that "when he is caught your passport will be found and then you'll be in it just like me!"

"I understood", said Albert, averting his gaze, "and did nothing…"

Otto Vogelsang, publisher of Otto's first book, *Crusade Against the Grail*, claims to have met with his former client a few days later on 8 March at the Hotel Zahringer in Freiburg. He insists that Otto appeared "relaxed and happy" and seemed "confident about his future". Otto left the hotel at around 11pm, apparently intending to take the train back to Munich. He seems, instead, to have travelled into the Austrian Tyrol. A postcard received shortly afterwards by his old friend Antonin Gadal in the French Pyrenees contained only four terse words: "*I miss your country*."

For some reason, Otto appears to have left the bus at Söll and continued his final journey on foot. The mountains here are little more than 2,000m (6,500ft) high, a walk in the park for a man like Otto. The last people to speak to him were the children of a Tyrolean farmer who saw a figure dressed in black emerge from the snowbound



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RICHARD STANLEY

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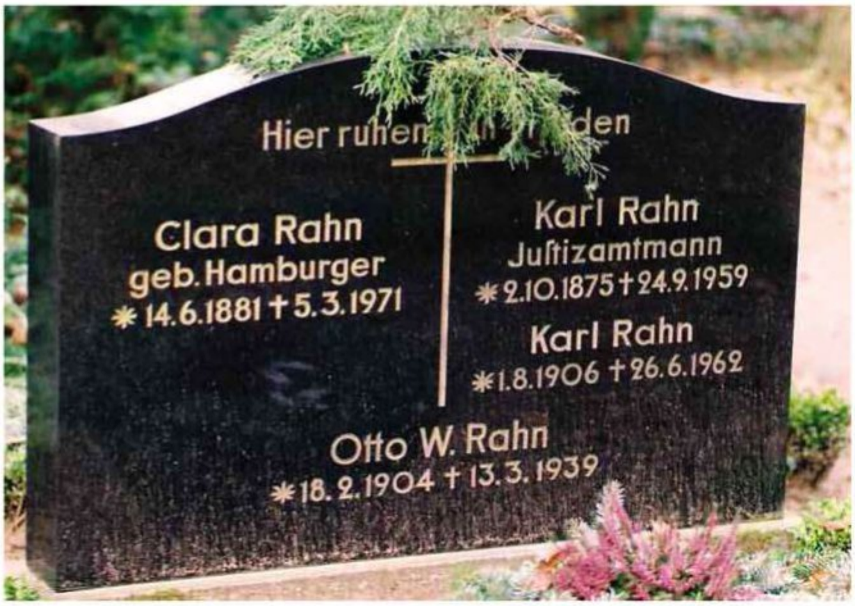
ABOVE: The scene of Otto Rahn's death at the Rechauerhof as it looks today. **TOP:** The tag from Otto's body bag.

woods outside their cottage on the late afternoon of 13 March 1939. The stranger came within 30m (100ft) of the house, stood still for a moment, and looked at his gold watch. He seemed to be in a hurry and paused just long enough to ask the children if they knew the time. Then he turned and went down the valley towards the stream where they watered the cows. After that, he seemed to disappear. As the shadows lengthened and a storm began to close in, the children's parents searched in vain for the mysterious hiker but were surprised to find that he had left no footprints in the snow.

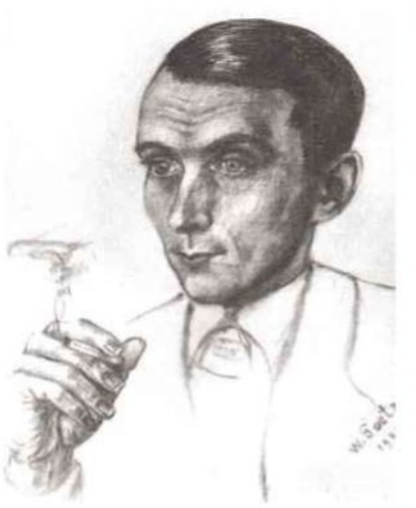
"In mid March 1939 by the Rechauerhof lay a metre [3ft 3in] of snow," explained Peter Maier, trudging uphill across the frozen pine needles. "The next farmyard was an hour and a half away. He must have gone upstream, walking in the water so as not to leave any tracks. My brother and I found him three months later when the spring thaw came, sitting just there under the tree, covered by his coat." Peter graciously pointed out the spot. The view was breathtaking. Looking down one could see across two different valleys, as far as the frontier. "We recognised him by his coat and hat. It was the man who had passed by our house. Next to his body lay two medicine bottles, one empty and the other half empty. He was identified by his passport which was still in his breast pocket…"

I don't know what was in those medicine bottles, but according to the subsequent police report filed in Söll the pills didn't kill him. He froze to death. The 35-year-old Grail historian was buried at the base of the Kufstein, where he lay until the end of the war when his body was moved to the family plot in Darmstadt. For reasons that remain unclear, no formal death certificate was ever issued. Whether he was the victim of foul play or had voluntarily chosen to leave a world he saw disintegrating around him remains a matter of debate. The fact that Wiligut-Weisthor was forced to retire from the SS that same month suggests that perhaps Otto *did* discover something in the course of his travels – something that led to both men being abruptly silenced.

The following May, a terse obituary appeared in the *Volkische Beobachter*: "In a snowstorm in the mountains this March SS. Obersturmführer Otto Rahn tragically departed this life. We mourn our dead comrade, decent SS man and writer of noted historical scholarly works." The obituary was signed by Karl Wolff, Himmler's Chief of Personal Staff. Wolff is an interesting choice to have penned Otto's death notice, considering the role he seems to have played in bringing about Wiligut-Weisthor's downfall and the subsequently dismantling of the Ahnenerbe SS's prehistory department. The previous November, Wolff had paid a personal call on Wiligut-Weisthor's estranged wife Malwinne in Salzburg, taking the opportunity provided by the Anschluss, Germany's political union with Austria, to pull her husband's psychiatric records, which were subsequently dumped on Himmler's desk, an action that made the ageing rune mage's continued presence in the SS politically untenable. It is widely assumed that Wolff had been acting in concert with a rival faction within the SS, one actively opposed to the pagan and Luciferian elements within the black order and aiming to systematically discredit and destroy them. Wiligut-Weisthor was too important to Himmler to be killed. Instead, he was quietly sequestered and shuffled from one SS safe house to another throughout the war, before dying on his assistant's couch in the winter of 1946. While Wiligut-Weisthor was an 80-year-old man with a history of psychiatric illness, Otto Rahn might have proved more of a liability and – so the story goes – had to be eradicated, and all trace of his research erased from the face of the Earth.



RICHARD STANLEY



ABOVE: The Rahn family grave in Darmstadt.
LEFT: Otto, here seen in a 1937 portrait.

After the war, Otto's work – tainted by its association with Nazi ideology – fell into obscurity, although his memory continued to live on in popular culture, giving rise to any number of fanciful tales concerning various treasures lost and found, warm water lakes concealed beneath the permafrost, subterranean UFO bases, dinosaur survival and ritual murder.

In 1964, an organisation known as the *Nerother Bund*, an offshoot of the German ramblers' association, the *Wandervogel*, under the direction of a certain Pater Martin Kuhn, constructed the world's only known monument to Otto in the forest of the Hünsruck. At the base of a circular pedestal of stones taken from the heretic citadel of Montsegur appears a simple, sobering inscription drawn from Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*: "Caution – these ways lead astray!"

Some think that Otto escaped Germany by assuming the identity of his dead brother Rudolph, surviving the war to become the head of Coca-Cola Europe, a theory that has by now been widely discredited. Others believe that he really did find the Grail and with it the secret of life eternal.

Standing at his family grave in Darmstadt, I suspected his remains are probably interred there. Of course, you would have to exhume the body and examine his teeth or DNA to be absolutely certain. The only thing you can really be sure of is that, despite his many sins, Otto Rahn died a martyr's death and hence deserves to sit amongst the elect of his unknown religion.

I left him a bunch of roses and 12 crow feathers I had collected from the floor of the cave in Ussat-les-Bains. Then, turning away, I walked back towards the car. **FT**

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

RICHARD STANLEY is a film-maker, anthropologist and author. His latest project is an adaptation of Clark Ashton Smith's 'Mother of Toads', part of the *Theatre Bizarre* anthology film. His new ebook *The Shadow of the Grail* is available from Amazon: http://amzn.to/dNlac8.

The Fortean Times Random Dictionary of the Damned

compiled by the Hierophant's Apprentice

No 38: TIME SLIPS

At about 7pm on the evening of 22 December 2004, Mark and his girlfriend Julia (last names unknown) set out to explore the back roads of the Catskill Mountains, near Margaretville, New York, in his F150 pickup. As he tells the story: "Me being me, I picked roads at random as we were driving, assuming that I could find my way back (I always can in PA), but after about 30 minutes, I was seriously lost. Then, it started snowing. A lot. … I started to panic just a bit. I drove around almost blind (the snow was falling rapidly) for another hour. Then Julia looked down at the gas gauge and started to really freak out. We were almost on empty.

"A pretty bad situation, blizzard in the mountains when I'm lost and we're running out of gas. This is how people die (or so I had heard)."

The couple finally – about an hour after they'd set out – saw some lights on the road ahead, and realised it was a gas station; the adjoining shop was signed 'General Store'. Immensely relieved, Mark pulled up to the pumps. But the pumps looked ancient, like something out of the 1940s, and Mark's heart sank at the thought that they were just for show. But a man walked up to them and said: "Fancy truck there boy, need a fill up?" While the man pumped gas, Mark asked him for directions back to Margaretville, which he gave "readily".

Julia, meanwhile, had gone into the store to look around; Mark, now following her in, noticed three cars parked outside, "all looking brand new, but from the 1940s (roughly)". Inside, he saw Julia talking to a woman behind the counter. There were "post office boxes up on the wall, big cut glass candy jars, etc. I waved hello and took a look around the place.

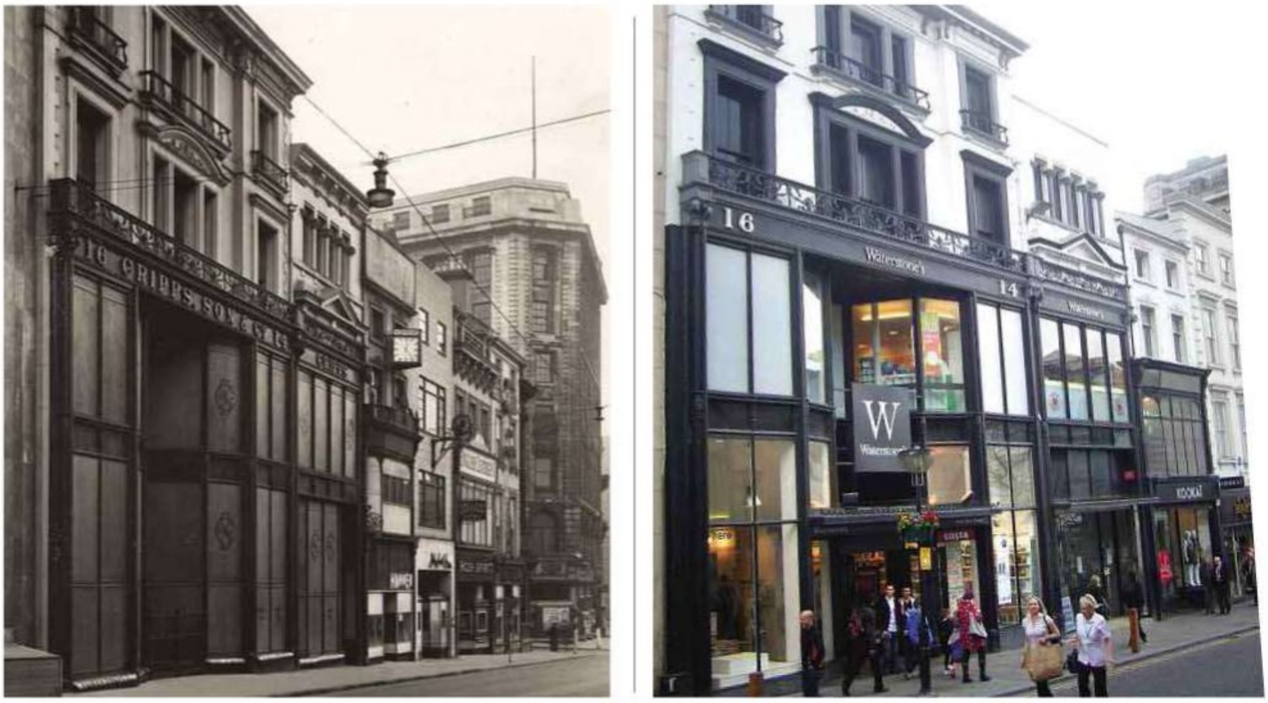
"There was no modern food… most stores, gas station or other, have doritos etc. Not this place. They had Coke and Hershey bars, but the Coke was in glass bottles and the Hershey bars were in an odd wrapper. This was true for just about everything in the store."

There was another surprise when they went out to pay for the fuel. "Now, normally when I pay for gas in that truck, it's around $50. The man said my total was $2.85. I looked at him thinking I had misunderstood or he was joking. Then I asked how much gas was per gallon. '10 cents per. I know it's a little high, but it's the War's fault.' I handed him the money in silence, got into the car, rolled down the window to thank him and drove off using the directions he gave me."

It all seemed quite straightforward at the time – as Mark said, "I knew who I was and everything, but nothing seemed out of place. It was only once the lights had faded and we were back on the main road that it clicked how strange everything was." The couple did, eventually, make it home to Julia's parents' house through the weather and the dark, but here was another odd thing. According to the clock in Mark's pickup, they had been gone four hours, getting back at around 11pm. But the house clock said it was only 9pm when they got back.

And that wasn't all. By his own admission, Mark is "fairly compulsive about filling gas tanks up once a destination is reached", and on arriving in Margaretville from Pennsylvania, he duly filled up. A full tank (about 19 gallons), he reckoned, would take his F-150 300 miles, say 250 when driving in the mountains. He and Julia had set out that evening with a full tank of gas. But by the time they came across the 1940s gas station and General Store, they were running on empty. As Mark said, "There's no way in hell I drove 250 miles in an hour… on back mountain roads." [1]

Mark and Julia went looking for the store two days later, asking everyone they could about it, but – as tends to happen after such experiences – couldn't find it again. That aside isn't intended as a knowing chuckle behind the hand – smartypants like us can spot a legend, eh, before it even comes round the corner, wink wink – more as a small chalk mark, perhaps even a tick, to register that there *is* a broad pattern to such experiences. Rare in the annals of anomalous phenomena, they've been termed 'timeslips'; although some reports so labelled seem to sit more comfortably among tales



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IRATE

GIVE MY REGARDS TO BOLD STREET: Liverpool's Bold Street past and present – ladies' outfitters Cripps, now a branch of Waterstone's bookshop.

of ghosts and hauntings.

Mark's account is notable among this already uncommon genre of (psychic? supernatural? *physical*?) anomalies for two things: first, not just he but his girlfriend Julia entered this 'other' realm; and second, they both interacted with its inhabitants.

It's the leaving of Liverpool that grieves me

Another account, fast becoming a classic, tells of 'Frank', a Merseyside policeman, who in July 1996 was shopping with his wife Carol in Liverpool. At Central Station, he set off for a record store in Ranelagh Street to look for a CD, while Carol made for Dillons bookshop in Bold Street to buy a copy of *Trainspotting*, by Irvine Welsh. They agreed to meet up again in the bookshop. About 20 minutes later, Frank was walking up an incline that leads to Bold Street when he noticed he had entered "an oasis of quietness". A small van "that looked like something out the 1950s", with CAPLAN's inscribed on its side, whizzed beeping across his path, barely missing him. Frank thought that strange, because that end of Bold Street had long since been a pedestrian-only area.

Frank crossed the road: where Dillons bookshop should have been now stood a store with the name 'Cripps' over its two entrances. Its windows displayed womens' handbags and shoes, but no books. At this point, the policeman noticed that the people passing up and down the street had on clothes that would have been fashionable 40 or 50 years previously. With one exception: Frank spotted a girl in her 20s dressed in hipsters and a lime-coloured sleeveless top, and carrying a Miss Selfridges bag. Feeling some relief, he smiled at the girl as she walked past him and into Cripps. He followed her in… and the interior of the building changed "in a flash" to the familiar layout of Dillons Bookshop.

The girl immediately turned to leave. He took her lightly by the arm and asked: "Did you see that then?" She answered: "Yeah. I thought it was a new clothes shop that had opened. I was going in to look around, but it's a bookshop." The girl laughed and walked out, shaking her head in disbelief. When Frank told his wife Carol what had happened to him, she said nothing strange had happened inside the bookstore. Frank was adamant that he had not hallucinated the episode.[2]

One can't say often enough that it's in the vexatious nature of hallucinations that they precisely mimic real experience: you can't tell you're having one until it's over, and sometimes not even then. Cripps *was*, however, an upmarket ladies' outfitters at 12–16 Bold Street, and the site is now a Waterstone's bookshop (which took over Dillons in 1998). The name Caplan crops up time and again among the good and great of the city. One of them, Louis Caplan, had a wholesale business (not that you'd guess that from his name or anything) on Soho Street, became Lord Mayor in the mid 1960s, and held a civic reception for the Beatles.

There are other tales[3] about alleged timeslips centred on Liverpool's Bold Street, but most smack of hauntings – not that we pretend to know what *they* are – or something more mundane, rather than the distinctive kind of interactive experience like the ones in Mark's and Frank's accounts. Both of which, we note, caught others up in whatever weirdness was going on: girlfriend Julia, in Mark's case, and the mystery girl in the lime-green top in Frank's. It would be helpful, would it not, if someone had managed to track down these participants in the events, and heard their side of the story? A perennial lapse in fortean studies.

A glympse into ye future

One of the virtues of timeslips that feature apparent visits to the past is that the past in question can, up to a point, be verified. Even then (such is the nature of the data) we don't know much about Frank other than that he was a policeman – a legendarily reliable witness. But was he a keen local historian? Did he have a history of odd, possibly hallucinatory, experiences? We don't cast aspersions on the man, here: it's more like taking *your* fingerprints after *your* car's been stolen, to eliminate you from the enquiry.

There are a few reports of people slipping into scenes from the future. These can be verified only once that future has come to pass. A couple of cases we know of would seem to fit those requirements. One's a classic of the literature.

In 1935, Wing Commander (later Air Marshal Sir) Victor Goddard was flying a Hawker Hart biplane from Andover to Edinburgh and on the way took a look at an old military airfield at Drem, East Lothian, in the hope of landing there, as it was near his final destination. No good. The runway was in ruins, and cows were grazing everywhere. On his flight back to Andover, Goddard ran into some vicious weather and went into a spin. How to deal with stalls and spins is one of the first things one's taught when learning to fly, so quite why Goddard got stuck in a spin that took him from 8,000ft (2,500m) to less than 100ft (30m) in altitude is itself something of a mystery. According to one account, he levelled out when he was about 20ft (6m) above the ground, somewhere near the Firth of Forth. He then "identified the road to Edinburgh and

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DAVID SUTTON

PIC COURTESY OF OLIVIA AND ROBERT TEMPLE

MYSTERY PLANE: A bright yellow Miles Magister of the kind that Goddard (above right) saw in 1935, two years before it entered service with the RAF.

soon was able to discern, through the gloom, the black silhouettes of the Drem Airfield hangars ahead of him, the same airfield he had visited the day before. The rain became a deluge, the sky grew even darker, and Goddard's plane was shaken violently by the turbulent weather as it sped toward the Drem hangars…"[4]

And then suddenly the weather cleared. In the bright sunlight, he saw Drem strangely restored: hangars and tarmac seemed brand new. Three Avro 504N trainer biplanes, along with a monoplane he didn't recognise, were parked at the end of the runway. All were painted bright yellow and all were marked with RAF roundels. Ground crew in blue uniforms were going about their business. No one seemed to notice him as he sailed past with just enough height to clear the hangars. Goddard then managed to gain altitude, flying back into the storm, and eventually landing safely at Andover.

Apart from the curious overnight renovation of the airstrip at Drem, Goddard was struck by the blue uniforms, the bright yellow of the aircraft, and the monoplane he had seen there. In 1935, RAF ground crew wore khaki, none of its planes was painted yellow, and there were only biplanes in service. It was not till 1937 that the Miles Magister monoplane started rolling off the production lines as a trainer for the new Hurricane (first delivered to the RAF in December 1937) and Spitfire fighters. By the beginning of World War II, RAF groundcrew were turning out in blue overalls, and trainer aircraft were painted yellow. Apparently, for a few seconds, Goddard had flown into the future while out of control of his aircraft in 1935. Goddard revealed nothing of this publicly until 1951, when he wrote up the experience for an article in the *Saturday Evening Post*. He retold the story in *Flight Towards Reality* (Turnstone 1975).

Caution! Do not swallow whole

Goddard's account seems, at first glance, invincible. Not so. A thorough, witty and well-informed blogger calling himself The BS Historian (we wish we knew his real identity) suggests that Goddard got lost in the storm and, simply, flew over another airfield, not Drem:

Air navigation in the 1930s was still achieved by dead reckoning; map and compass, and required that landmarks were a) visible, and b) correctly identified. Otherwise one could very quickly end up way off course. If Goddard wasn't over Drem, where was he? The most likely candidate for me is Renfrew Aerodrome, then home to the Scottish Flying Club. Not only did the club make use of Avro 504s, but other civil aircraft were regular visitors. Many of these would have been brightly coloured, and monoplanes were in common use. In fact an antecedent of the Magister Goddard thought he saw was photographed at Renfrew that very year. From the air they would have been indistinguishable. And as maintenance staff were civilians, the objection to prematurely blue RAF overalls would no longer apply. Although Renfrew is on the wrong side of the country (70 miles [115km] away from Drem), such a deviation in course is far from impossible in a 400-mile [645km] cross-country journey like Goddard's.[5]

Especially, we might add, in the conditions Goddard describes.

No one seemed to notice Goddard zooming so low over 'his' airfield, whichever one it was, but timeslippers don't always appear in past or future scenes merely as spectators, as we've seen (policeman 'Frank' was nearly run over in his, after all). Joan Forman, a pioneer collector of timeslip accounts, heard the following curious tale of mutual astonishment.

In the early 1980s, a British family was travelling on a West German *autobahn*. The road wasn't busy, so naturally they noticed a lone vehicle approaching very fast on the other side of the motorway. It looked like no car they had ever seen – in fact it looked more like a UFO. No wheels were visible, and the vehicle seemed to be cylindrical in shape, with four round windows. Out of them, as this futuristic 'car' sped by, they saw four "very frightened faces" staring at them. If the British family saw phantoms from the future, the phantoms were equally amazed to be seeing an automobile from the distant past. Something like seeing a headless horseman on the A354 near Salisbury, perhaps.

But think about this again, and ask what questions haven't been asked. Stretch limos were certainly around in the early 1980s. What was the weather like? Given enough water on the road, and sufficient speed, a vehicle can kick enough spray to hide the wheels and change its apparent shape. Perhaps the oncoming British car looked just as strange, or maybe the passengers in the futuristic vehicle just hadn't seen a quaint foreign car in a long time. Perhaps.

One occasionally sees speculative explanations for timeslips that appeal to quantum mechanics, string theory, and so on. The problem here is one of scale. These theories apply to exceedingly tiny particles, not to *lumpen* items such as cars and planes. As far as we can work out, even a fairly small thing, such as a frog or a false moustache, would need so much energy (fuelled from where?) to hop from one time-scheme (or parallel universe) to another that both 'universes' would either collapse or explode. Still, we have to remember that those who said trains travelling at more than 30mph would suffocate the passengers were wrong, so perhaps we should beware of making premature judgements.

Then again, consider this. To move through time – say from where you are now, reading this magazine, to where you were (possibly in the very same chair in the same room with the same cat on your lap) when you read the last issue – calls for you to move not just through time, but through space as well, to the position in space where you, the cat and the Earth were on that day. Which complicates things, and their mechanics, somewhat. A thought that has some bones to be picked out of it.

Notes

1 For Mark (Wookie McFly)'s account and a discussion of this experience, see http://bit.ly/hVasRt (unexplained-mysteries.com).

2 See http://bit.ly/igxS6t (qsl.net); http://bbc.in/fmuTdS (BBC).

3 See for example http://bit.ly/fUuFR3 (parascience.org.uk).

4 Herb Kugel: "The Air Marshal and the Unexplained", *Fate*, Vol 53 No 7 (July 2000), also reproduced at http://bit.ly/cMVoVQ (llewellyn.com).

5 http://bit.ly/hX4Nh9 (bshistorian.wordpress.com).

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POLICE
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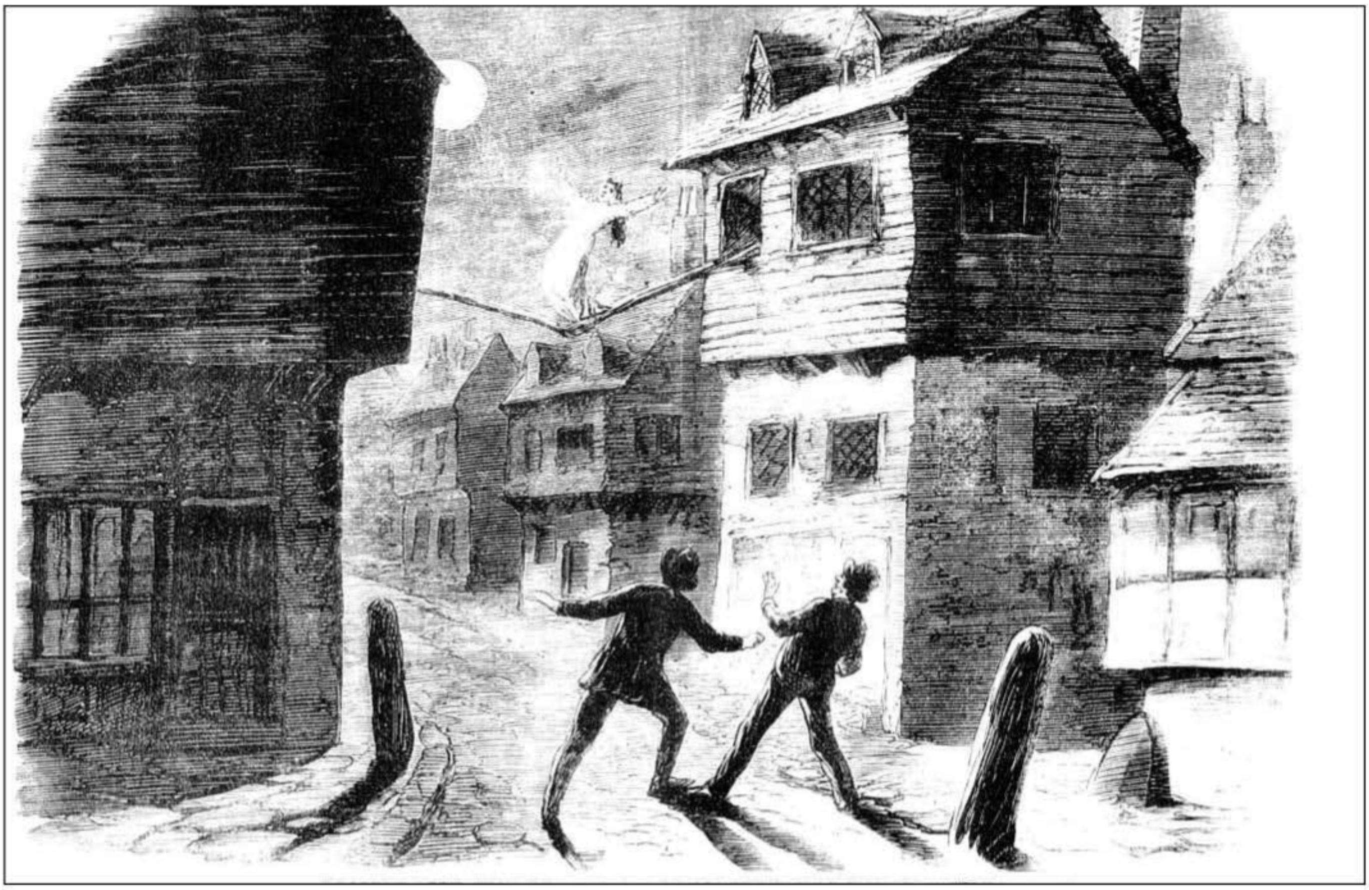
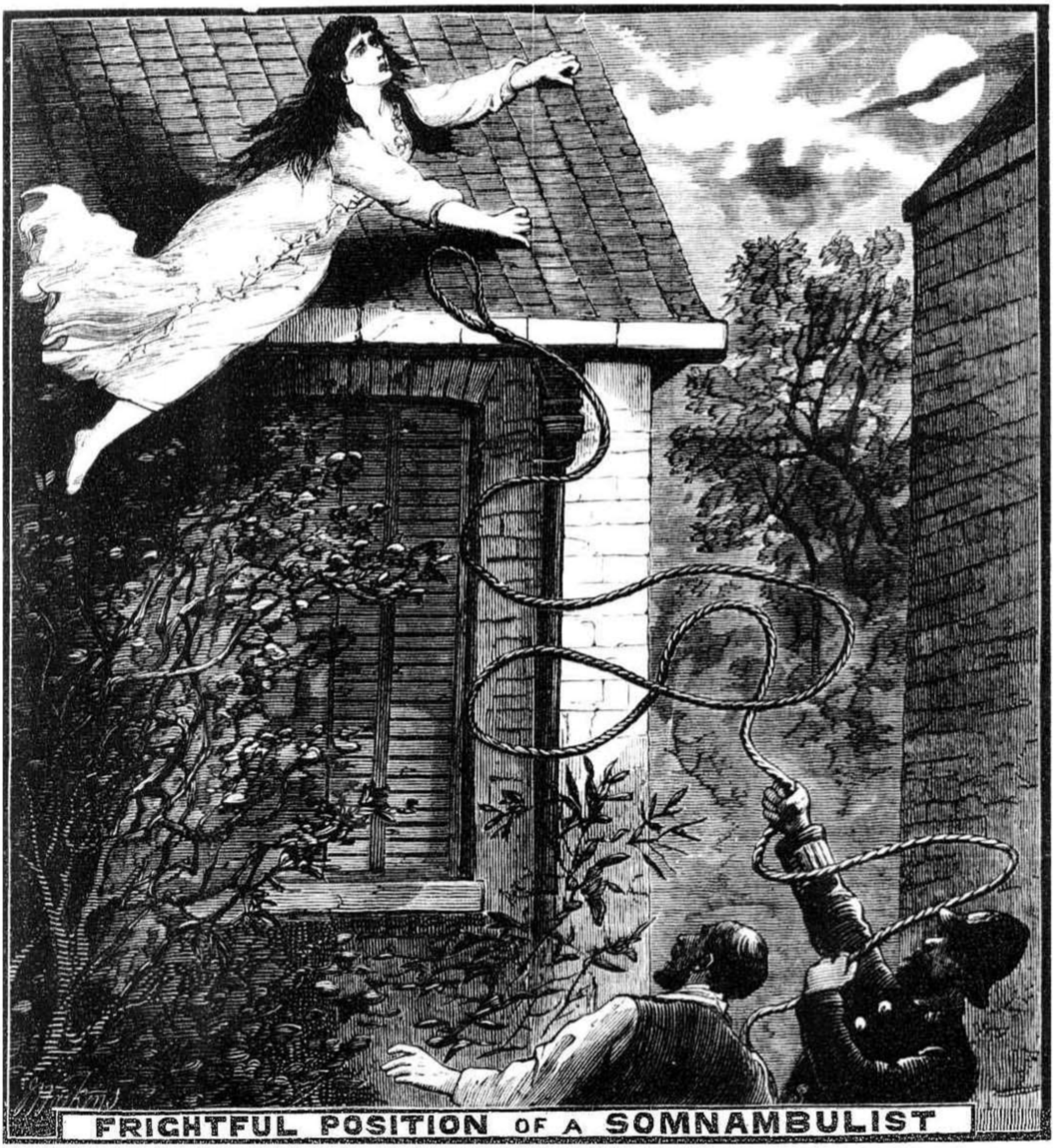
In the first of a new regular series, JAN BONDESON presents some sensational stories and startling Victorian images from the "worst newspaper in England" – the *Illustrated Police News.*



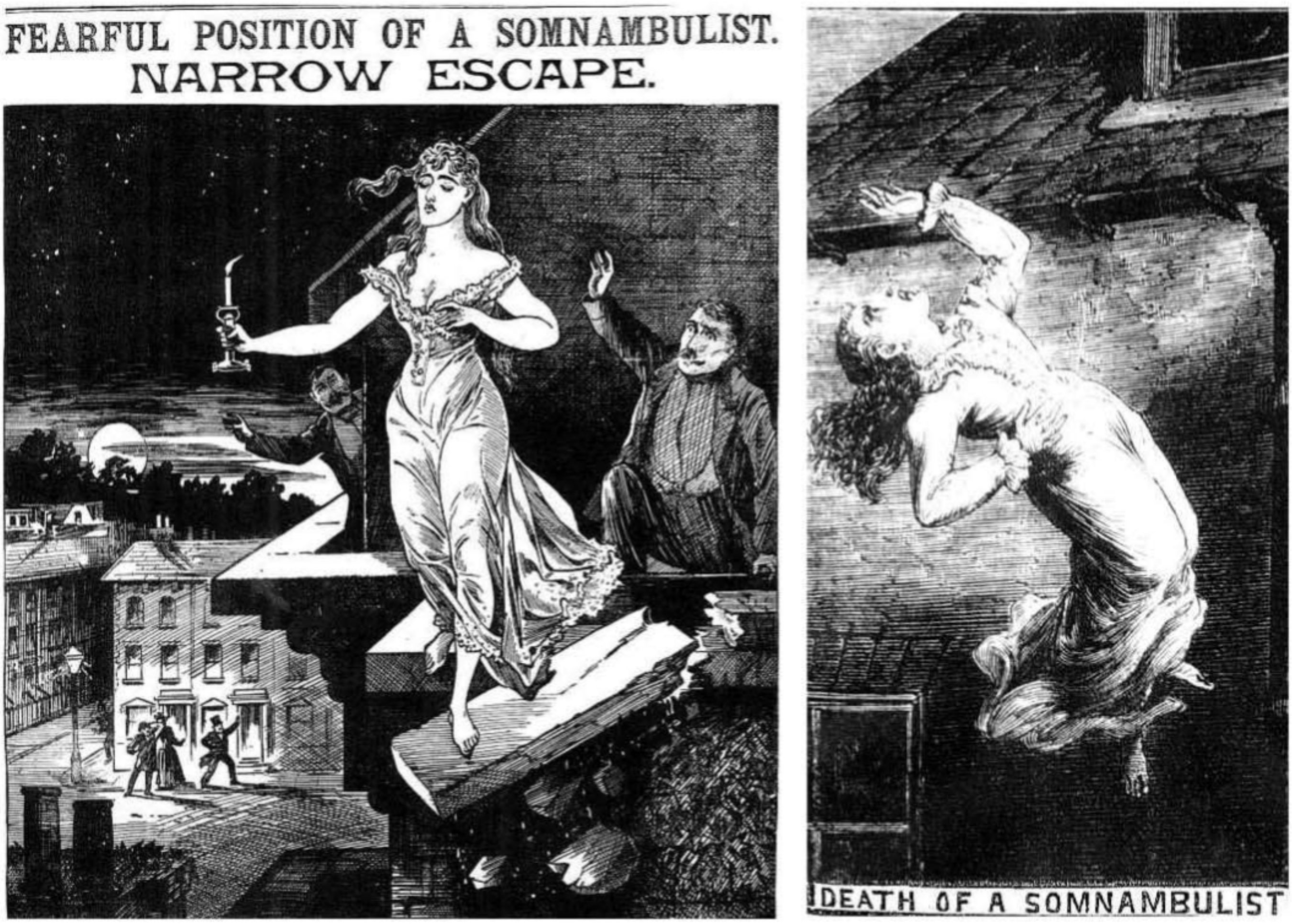
In November 1886, after a newspaper poll had voted the *Illustrated Police News* "the worst newspaper in England", a journalist from the *Pall Mall Gazette* went to interview the proprietor of this notorious publication, Mr George Purkess. The office of the *IPN*, in the Strand, could be detected from some distance, due to the small crowd gathered outside, in front of the pictorial placard advertising the current issue. Purkess, described as "a stout, comfortable-looking man of middle age," received the news of the vote with the greatest composure, being thick-skinned with regard to such criticism. He jovially invited his fellow journalist into his private office.

The first truly successful British periodical to tap into the public appetite for crime and sensation, the *IPN* had been founded in 1863, and taken over by Purkess two or three years later. It consisted of one pictorial page and three text pages in folio, and sold for one penny. The normal weekly circulation was between 150,000 and 200,000 copies, but special issues could sell as many as 600,000. The paper had most buyers and subscribers in the Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham areas; its London circulation was just one eighth of the total issue. Circulation abroad was fairly limited, although a friend had recently sent Purkess a copy of the *IPN* which he had picked up in Hyderabad. Although the *IPN* was considered a workingman's newspaper appealing to lowbrow tastes, Purkess claimed that a Dowager Marchioness was a permanent subscriber, and that an Earl had once ordered his biography of Calcraft the Hangman; several clergymen, according to Purkess, had also been known to request copies.

The *IPN*'s pages were filled with murders at home and abroad, assaults and outrages, accidents and macabre events, all described with gusto and luridly illustrated. For the fortean enthusiast, the *IPN* has a good deal to offer. Just like Charles Fort himself, the newspaper's editorial staff sifted an enormous amount of newspaper copy from Britain, Europe and the United States in their search for dastardly crimes and sensational stories. When there were no recent murders, curiosities of other kinds were pressed into service: ghosts, freaks and hermits, strange deaths and premature burials all featured over the years, and bizarre stories from the animal kingdom were also used on occasion to bolster the paper's contents: a swan is eaten by a boa constrictor; a monkey scalds a cat with a


FRIGHTFUL POSITION OF A SOMNAMBULIST

FACING PAGE: Clara Dalrymple, the Glastonbury somnambulist, walks the plank between two houses. She fell, but her dress caught in a lamp-post (which the careless artist left out) and she was saved. *IPN 1 June 1868*. **ABOVE**: A young lady somnambulist in Kidderminster is narrowly saved by clinging on to the roof. *IPN 8 Aug 1885.*


FEARFUL POSITION OF A SOMNAMBULIST.
NARROW ESCAPE.
DEATH OF A SOMNAMBULIST

ABOVE LEFT: The pretty somnambulist Miss Charlton takes a walk on the parapet of her family's house in Manchester, but fortunately falls only four feet, onto the flat roof of a neighbouring property. *IPN 17 April 1897*. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Madame Broneau, the French somnambulist, falls to her death from a roof in Belfast. *IPN 9 Feb 1878*.

teapot; a man is attacked by a furious magpie; and a burglar is confronted by a razor-wielding orang-utan. When an old London tramp is attacked by hooligans, he is defended by his large troupe of trained rats. Fish fall from the sky, sea monsters attack, and in two separate incidents, a child and a dog are abducted by large eagles.

The main reason the *IPN* was such a scandalous newspaper was its lewd and graphic illustrations, which outraged many people. Heads were crushed and limbs lopped off; blood spouted from knife wounds; children screamed in agony when bitten by dogs, and wives desperately begged for mercy when beaten by their brutal husbands. Images that would today seem amusing and burlesque – 'fast' women fighting or getting drunk, or a lady bicyclist flying through the air after being gored from behind by a bull – also infuriated the rather more prudish Victorians. When interviewed, George Purkess defended his *IPN* artists, who he thought were as good as those working for any rival journal, including the *Illustrated London News* and the *Graphic*. He had half a dozen artists on his staff in London, and occasionally employed 70 or more freelance artists in all parts of the country. Whenever a high-profile crime was committed, Purkess was able to dispatch one of his artists to the scene. Several times, he claimed, criminals depicted in the *IPN* had written back to offer their compliments on their excellent likenesses in the paper.

1. SAUCY SOMNAMBLULISTS

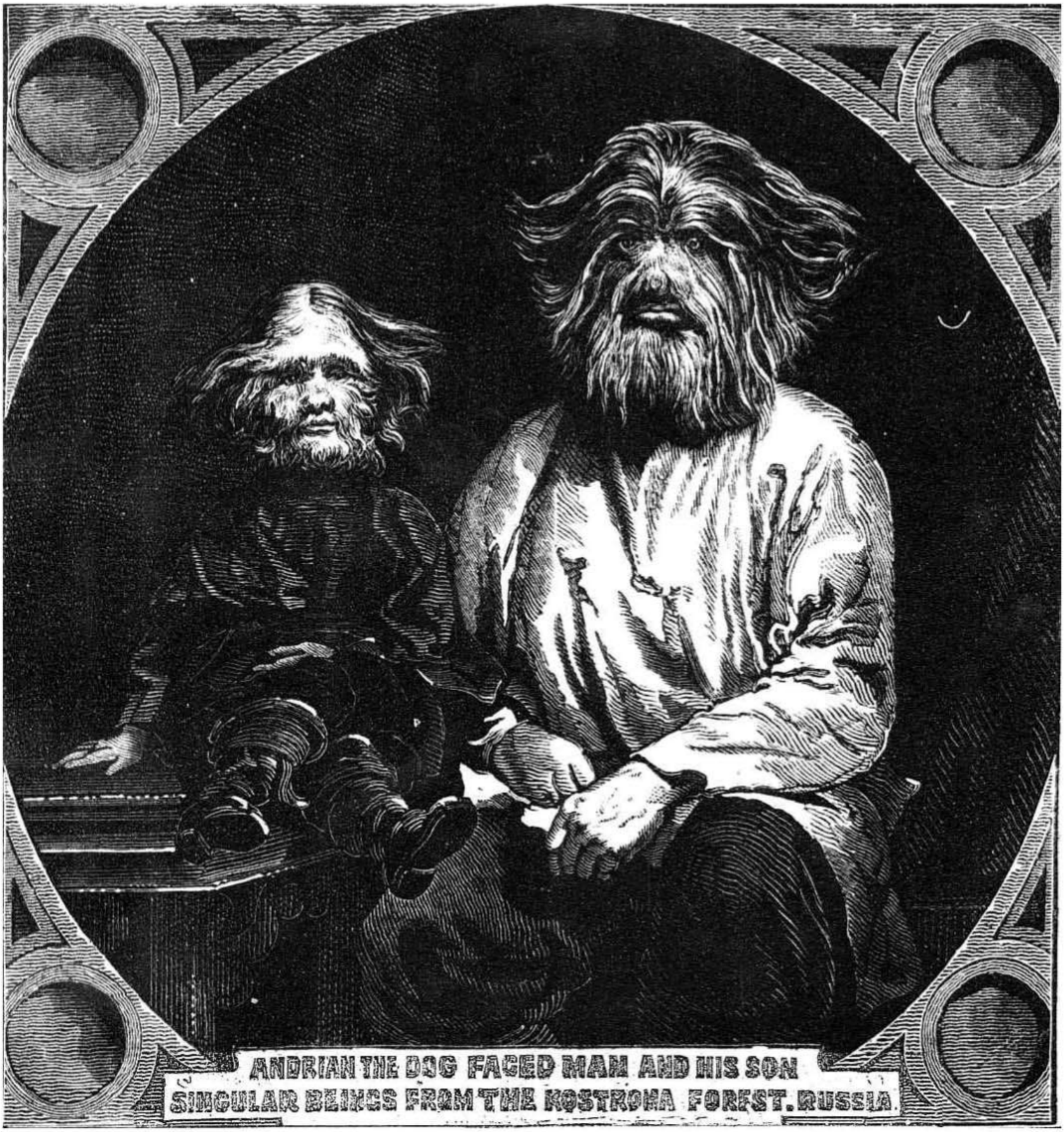
As I have shown in another article on premature burial and supposed corpses coming to life ("The Dead Reawaken!", **FT247:44–49**), the Victorians in general, and the readers of the *IPN* in particular, had a fascination for the conscious but immobile (usually female) body, at risk of being buried alive while in some strange trance-like state, but unable to move or cry out. This fascination also extended to the mobile but unconscious female body: sleepwalkers, or somnambulists as the Victorians called them, were among the favourite subjects for the *IPN*'s bawdy-minded draughtsmen. Male somnambulists may have been news, but they were never *Illustrated Police News*, even if they performed a tap dance on the roof of the House of Lords; the *IPN*'s somnambulists were all young, female, and scantily clad. Whether they were saved at the last minute by some gallant male rescuer, or fell to their death screaming with terror, they helped to sell a lot of newspapers.

2. ANDRIAN THE DOG-FACED MAN AND HIS SON

In 1874, the London newspapers announced that two of the greatest human curiosities of the age had arrived at the Metropolitan Music Hall in Edgware Road: Andrian the Russian Dog-faced Man and his son Fedor (see **FT209:49–51**). A reporter and a draughtsman from the *Illustrated Police News* were present to provide a feature about these strange beings. The 55-year-old Andrian was a quiet, morose individual, who spoke only Russian. He was of medium height, strongly built, and dressed in not very clean-looking Russian clothes. His eyes were a curious yellow, and his skin an unhealthy grey.

Young Fedor, who was on show with him, was actually Andrian's illegitimate son, the impresario claimed, and many of the female visitors to the exhibition must have experienced a *frisson* of horror that even a sex-starved Russian peasant woman had once consented to copulate with such a monster. Andrian was like a man half-changed into an animal, his face entirely covered with hair, like that of a Skye terrier. It was a spectacle destined to strike horror into the Victorian imagination.

A doctor was impressed to see Andrian drink a pint of undiluted vodka with relish, as he carved his beefsteak at the exhibition. He showed little affection for his son, and much resented it when some visitors to the exhibition spoke to the lively young Fedor and tipped him handsomely, and then passed by the smelly, unprepossessing father with horror. The showman said that, ever since he had first put Andrian on show before the curious in St Petersburg, Paris and Berlin the year before, the hairy man had vowed to


ANDRIAN THE DOG FACED MAN AND HIS SON
SINGULAR BEINGS FROM THE KOSTROMA FOREST. RUSSIA.

return to his native village as soon as his tour of the European capitals was over, and to spend all the money he had earned entirely on strong drink. According to another, more prepossessing version, Andrian was a devout member of the Russo-Greek Church. Others in that faith had told him that he must surely have been cursed by the Devil, and poor Andrian spent all his money on the purchase of prayers from a devout community of monks near Kostroma, "hoping one day to be able to introduce his frightful countenance in the court of heaven", as the exhibition pamphlet flippantly expressed it.

If many visitors to the exhibition were disgusted or horrified by the debauched and unkempt spectacle of Andrian, all were charmed by his little son Fedor. Although just four years old, Fedor was more intelligent, and much more sprightly and vigorous, than his wretched father. The growth of down on his face was not yet so heavy as to conceal his features, but the medical men who saw him did not doubt that he would one day become just as hairy as his father. Fedor's hair was white and as thick as that of an Angora cat, and he had long whiskers and a tuft of long hair at the outer angle of either eye. He liked to travel and to meet new people, and was already getting spoilt and petulant. He spoke French, and, in spite of his tender age, gave rational replies to questions from the audience. The dentition of both Andrian and Fedor was very defective. Andrian had only the stump of a tooth in the upper jaw and four rotten teeth in the lower jaw. Fedor had a perfectly toothless upper jaw, with no alveolar processes, and only four incisors in the lower jaw.

Andrian and Fedor remained in London until early April 1874, and then spent 10 days in Liverpool. According to the *Liverpool Mercury* of 14 April, the jolly young Fedor pointed at the bald head of a doctor in the audience and suggested that it would have been an improvement if some of the hair on his own face could have been transferred to the savant's gleaming pate!

Andrian died later in 1874, probably from cirrhosis of the liver brought on by his excessive drinking of spirits. Fedor's later distinguished career in the American sideshow, under the name of Jo-Jo the Dog-faced Boy, has been described in my recent book *Freaks*. Jo-Jo toured the world with Barnum & Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth until his death from pneumonia in 1912. **FT**

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Get ready for The Rapture

An American radio evangelist has advised Americans to re-adjust their doomsday clocks, reports **TED HARRISON.**

TED HARRISON is a former BBC religious affairs correspondent, long-time *FT* contributor and author of many books, including *Diana: The Making of a Saint* (2007).

The world will not end in December 2012, as the supporters of the popular Mayan Calendar theory contest, but 19 months earlier – on 21 May this year.

Thousands of Americans will be getting phone messages in the coming weeks warning them to be prepared for the Day of Judgement on 21 May 2011. They will be given a free voice mail number to contact and a web address for more information.

The warning comes from Californian-based preacher Harold Camping, who for the last 50 years has hosted a regular show on the Christian broadcasting network Family Radio and who claims to have calculated the precise date for the end of the world from Bible texts (**FT269:11**). 21 May 2011, he says, is exactly 5,000 years since Noah's flood. Thousands of dollars are being spent to get the message across and dozens of supporters are handing out leaflets in cities around the world.

One of the most dedicated of Camping's followers is US veteran Marie Exley, from Colorado Springs. She is so convinced by Camping's case that she has embarked on her own campaign to warn the world. Despite being unemployed, she has bought advertising space and, with a team of helpers, is using billboards and street-corner tactics to spread the word in cities across the country. Groups of end-time missionaries are setting out across Latin America and travelling to Africa. In February, Exley was in Turkey, hoping eventually to reach Iraq (where she had served with the military) to warn the Iraqis of the judgement to come. By that time, it will probably be May, and so she's making no plans to come home.

Others have stayed nearer to home to spread the word. Allison Warden of Raleigh, North Carolina (described by a local newspaper as "well-spoken and bespectacled") has plastered her car with messages and drives around the city with the date boldly displayed on the side. One New Jersey bus driver, however, was reprimanded for giving tracts to his passengers, even though, as he pointed out, his bus company had been paid to poster their fleet with 21 May advertisements.

SAVE THE DATE!
RETURN OF CHRIST
MAY 21, 2011
WeCanKNOW.com

ABOVE: Websites and billboards such as this one are spreading the word.

Back in 1994, Camping, a retired businessman and civil engineer, made a similar prediction and published a book called *1994?* to promote it. When pressed at the time by legendary interviewer Larry King, Camping was confident, but cautious. His date for the Day of Judgement was "a strong likelihood, but I can't say absolutely".

Today, he has thrown all caution to the wind. A recent caller to his show asked if, come 22 May nothing had happened, would he refund money to listeners who had cashed in their life savings to help the radio station broadcast the message?

Camping accused the caller of talking nonsense. "The 22nd of May will be day two of Judgement Day. I don't even know if there will still be a radio station. It will be a day of horror and millions will die."

The first sign of the Apocalypse, Camping believes, will be The Rapture. Suddenly, Christians will disappear. People will be eating and drinking and carrying on with normal life when – wham, the righteous will be whisked away up to Heaven, thus avoiding the horrors to come. The punishment to follow will last five months and will be over by 21 October, when the world will officially come to an end.

In the strange world of American fundamentalism, end-time scares are not rare, but this one has grabbed the imagination more than most. To some Christians, apocalyptic prophecies are a staple of belief and, to them, the latest and most persuasive prophecies will always be of interest. What is unusual about Camping's claim is that it has also received mainstream media coverage, even featuring on the top US talk show *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno*. Meanwhile, Camping's YouTube site, explaining the 'evidence' from Biblical texts and the logic behind his deductions, has attracted a million hits.

Not surprisingly, dozens of websites and publications have been produced by churches to refute the radio soothsayer's claims. There's even one site (refutecamping.com) which plays Camping at his own game. It accepts that the Bible is the inerrant word of God and that the Biblical numbers are significant, but questions Camping's mathematics: "Camping says: '2011 AD is precisely 7,000 years after Noah preached'. Noah lived 950 years – when did Noah preach?"

Camping explains his erroneous 1994 prediction as a mathematical error. Although sceptics treat the 89 year-old prophet as a joke, some are worried about what might happen when the date arrives and nothing happens. Camping's ex-supporters refer to 1994 as "the great disappointment" (following the example of the 19th-century Millerites) and one believer is said to have committed suicide.

Anyone wishing to track the progress of end-time prophecy can look up The Rapture Index.[1] It is described as a 'Dow Jones' index of end-time activity, or a prophetic speedometer: the higher the number, the faster the world is moving towards The End.

The Index is compiled by monitoring 45 fields of activity, from natural disasters like earthquakes and floods through to false Messiah claims and occult activity:

'Rapture Index of 100 and below: Slow prophetic activity.

'Rapture Index of 100 to 130: Moderate prophetic activity.

'Rapture Index of 130 to 160: Heavy prophetic activity.

'Rapture Index above 160: Fasten your seat belts!' FT

NOTES

[1] www.raptureready.com.

Forseeing a fortean future?

ALAN MURDIE argues that the sceptical challenges to Professor Daryl J Bem's controversial positive psi results may inadvertently create as big a problem for mainstream science as for parapsychology...

A barrister working in intellectual property rights and a keen investigator of paranormal claims, **ALAN MURDIE** is former chairman of the Ghost Club and co-author of *The Cambridge Ghost Book.*

In the future, 2010 may be seen as a year when parapsychology posed some major challenges for mainstream science. And perhaps even more interestingly, the reactions of critics to these challenges may give – albeit unintentionally – a remarkable encouragement to fortean thinking of all kinds.

In spring 2010, Dr Barry Colvin published an acoustic analysis of poltergeist raps recorded around the world, over a 40-year period.[1] While poltergeist raps and normally produced raps sound similar, instrumental analysis reveals a different sound pattern with each of the alleged poltergeist raps. If this effect stands up (attempts at replication are being encouraged), it constitutes the first instrumental – as opposed to anecdotal – evidence for a spontaneous paranormal effect.

However, findings acknowledged as posing the biggest challenge to orthodoxy were announced in November 2010, emerging from research into pre-sentience – literally 'feeling the future' – conducted by Professor Daryl J Bem of Cornell University.[2] Prof. Bem has reported positive results from tests involving nine different sets of experiments into pre-sentience, indicating that the human body reacts to stimuli that have yet to arise.

The impact was heightened by the announcement that these results would be carried in the prestigious *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, a publication enjoying an international reputation as the world's leading journal in its field and for imposing stringent standards on contributors. The appearance of Bem's paper in such a prestigious journal could not be dismissed, and it received widespread media coverage on both sides of the Atlantic, forcing sceptics to take notice. Critics of Bem's conclusions have broadly accepted that he was working to the established scientific rulebooks and obtained significant results. However, so uncomfortable are the implications, that some are now questioning how science typically operates, particularly with statistics.

From North America, there were immediate attempts at damping down the impact of Bem's findings with an article by Prof. James Alcock of Glendon University, Toronto, published on the website of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSI, formerly CSICOP). Faced with a peer-reviewed paper in such an august journal, Prof. Alcock held back from criticising the decision to publish. However, he argued that Bem's research contains flaws and can't be significant, as there have been similar false dawns in the past that failed to amount to anything. His sceptical fire-fighting efforts failed to address the issue that successive generations of parapsychologists have tightened their protocols, with psi-effects still persisting. Since the 1980s, the statistical technique of meta-analysis (which examines collectively the combined results of all known trials and experiments) has also been applied with precognition experiments suggesting that genuine effects occur. For his part, Prof. Bem robustly answered these points on the CSI website (which, to its credit, CSI published), and the argument is ongoing.[3] Parapsychologist Dean Radin, author of *The Conscious Universe* (1997) and *Entangled Minds* (2005), has also weighed in against the partial version of history presented by Alcock.[4] Meanwhile in the UK, an awareness that Bem's research and that of others appears statistically sound has led the UK's best-known sceptic Prof. Richard Wiseman to put out a plea that all attempts at replicating Bem's experiments be reported to him, to undertake meta-analysis.[5]

But perhaps the most remarkable response so far has come with an editorial in the UK's most popular science weekly, *New Scientist.*[6] Normally sceptical about paranormal claims, *New Scientist* was confronted with a potent set of positive experimental results to be carried in a distinguished journal. So under headings including "First proof of precognition? The truth may be even more challenging", *New Scientist* openly declared Bem's conclusions to be "breathtaking: people can perceive future events" but swiftly added the caution: "If that were true, it would turn our ideas about time and human perception on their head".

Turning ideas of time and perception upside down is still too much of a challenge, at least for the present. So *New Scientist* took inspiration (and perhaps comfort) from a paper by Eric-Jan Wagenmakers and colleagues at the University of Amsterdam attacking Bem's research. Robustly entitled "Why psychologists must change the way they analyze their data: The case of Psi", Wagenmakers argues that Bem should have used an alternative statistical approach, Bayesian analysis, which would then have suggested the evidence for precognition is weak or non-existent.[7]

However, this comes at a price, as Wagenmakers and colleagues realise. While dismissing precognition as impossible, with some irrelevant side-swipes about weather forecasters not employing clairvoyants and psychics failing to enrich themselves at casinos, Wagenmakers states: "Our assessment suggests that there is something deeply wrong with the way experimental psychologists design their studies and report their statistical results."

In other words, if Bem is wrong, then a lot of other people must be wrong too. Grasping the implications, and simultaneously retaining some faith in everyday probabilities regarding replicating Bem's results ("*New Scientist*'s bet is that most attempts will fail") the *NS* editorial admits: "[T]he affair may bolster the argument that there is a flaw in the way most researchers test their hypotheses". Ominously, it acknowledges that: "Many other published conclusions might collapse if subjected to similar analysis."

This is radical stuff, recognising that findings from psi research pose "a challenge to mainstream science" not in demonstrating precognition but in showing that something is wrong with the way science deals with statistics. But is the possibility of precognition really so unlikely?

It is nearly 40 years since Arthur Koestler (1905–1983; see **FT201:32–39**) pointed out in his book *The Roots of Coincidence* (1972) that many of the ideas in modern physics – at both particle and cosmological levels – routinely deal with phenomena as extraordinary as ESP and anything in occult literature: the relativity of time, the bending of space, particles displaying "spooky action" at a distance, particles travelling back in time and many other mind-boggling effects. Bem is better placed to appreciate this than many, having originally qualified in physics before turning to social sciences. Indeed, (in an irony Charles Fort would have loved), the same issue of *New Scientist* showing such caution over Bem's research carried an article entitled "The Quantum Time Machine" about the teleportation and time-travelling possibilities of photons at the quantum level. With regard to the strangeness of modern physics, it is interesting to note the somewhat flippant response by Wagenmakers – a footnote declaring that, although the fall of the Twin Towers was an event consistent with physics, it does not mean conspiracy theories about the 9/11 terrorist attacks are true.[8]

Actually, the intellectual challenge is determining whether weird quantum effects have equivalents on the human scale, within the brain.[9] This is more problematic for science than philosophy. Bem's research has huge implications for concepts such as causation, experience and free will, but it may be noted that as long ago as 1781 Immanuel Kant argued that the real nature of space and time must be different from our experienced sense perceptions of them – nearly 150 years before 20th-century physics established the same.[10] Unfortunately, relatively few modern philosophers have kept apace with both quantum physics and developments in psychical research. Perhaps contemporary philosophers are wisely fence-sitting, waiting for science to make its mind up!

Such caution may be advisable (though it is certainly not inspiring), since suggestions that significant results in psi-testing originate in flaws in the ways scientists use and understand statistics have appeared before. Speculating that statistical analysis is at fault has echoes of an argument in parapsychology which flared up over half a century ago. And perhaps more alarmingly, such critiques open up discussion of even more extraordinary ideas, though neither Bem's critics nor *New Scientist* have realised this.

WILLIAM GOLDSMITH

Physics deals with things as bizarre as the paranormal

In 1954, mathematician G Spencer Brown argued in an article in *Nature* that significant results in psi experiments might be due, not to some paranormal effect, but to unsoundness in normal statistical methods.[11] In short, they were statistical freaks. Brown raised further arguments in a book, *Probability and Scientific Inference* (1957), maintaining that statistically significant results of the same order as those arising in psi tests had been obtained by matching columns of numbers taken from random number tables. He further suggested that control tests often give just as significant results as do the actual experiments, showing that such effects are due to an inherent non-random behaviour of cards and dice, not to ESP or PK as researchers concluded. Most radically, Spencer Brown argued there may be something wrong with the logical basis of our ideas of probability, hence the peculiar experimental effects.

Almost certainly without realising it, Bem's critics today are reviving such spectres. Although Brown's statistical challenge rumbled on for some years, it eventually petered out in the 1960s. No one felt inclined to follow Brown's path, particularly after one critic, Christopher Scott, dismissed Brown's arguments as "almost without exception either erroneous, irrelevant or frivolous" in the course of a detailed point-by-point rebuttal.[12]

Fifteen years after what became known as the "Spencer Brown intervention", the problem of randomness in psi testing was re-examined again, in experiments by Robert Harvie. These were detailed in *The Challenge of Chance* (1973), co-authored with Sir Alister Hardy and Arthur Koestler. Harvie selected, at random, sequences amounting to 50,000 digits from random number tables. These represented the "target cards" in ESP experiments. The subject's guesses were replaced by numbers produced by a computer – pseudo-random digits, so-called because they were not strictly random but produced by an algorithm.

Using this procedure, Harvie found the number of correct guesses or matches produced was significantly less than that predicted by chance. Experiments were also conducted with mass picture-drawing tests that failed to show telepathy, but indicated that some very strange coincidences were taking place within control experiments. But more disturbingly, the authors of *The Challenge of Chance* went further than Spencer Brown in seeing this as more than evidence of our statistical concepts being awry. The authors tentatively explored the idea that somewhere between causality and pure chance, there lies a fundamental principle of nature still awaiting discovery. This might be described as a yet-unknown principle of probability linking different events without a causal connection. From this perspective, what we might call telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, psychokinesis, and meaningful coincidences are all merely different manifestations, under different conditions, of the same universal principle. Perhaps some mysterious process is at work, as yet unrecognised and acting independently of space and time constraints. As the authors admitted, this was a short step to the theories of psychologist Carl Jung (1875–1961) and his ideas of synchronicity linking meaningful events in a non-causal way (see **FT171:42–47**).

Jung himself had conveyed these ideas in a letter to the English psychical researcher Tony Cornell in a letter in February 1960. Jung stated: "I do not believe that synchronistic (or Psi) events are due to any supranormal faculties of the human mind, but rather they are relatively predictable events, which *must occur*, if Space, Time and causality are not axiomatic, but only statistical truths. They occur by themselves and not because we think that we possess a particular faculty to perceive them." (Jung's emphasis)[13]

Effectively, Jung's concepts of synchronicity and meaningful coincidences dispense with the problem of humans possessing powers of telepathy or seeing into the future; rather our ordinary senses just notice strange events occurring from the operation of this universal principle. Parapsychologists have often been criticised for not coming up with a workable theory to explain psi results, but Jung's idea has the advantage of incorporating all psi phenomena, including those occurring outside controlled environments. As *Fortean Times* has illustrated for years, the vast majority of extraordinary events occur not inside laboratories but in the wider world, including apparitions, poltergeists, premonitions and all manner of oddities. All may be interpreted within Jung's framework as expressions of archetypes from the collective unconscious, working in accordance with this unrecognised principle.

Undoubtedly this is not a conclusion that *New Scientist*, Bem's critics, nor even most parapsychologists would entertain; it would mean that *both* mainstream science and parapsychology are in error. But in raising flags of objection regarding established statistical techniques and findings, Bem's critics may also be inadvertently launching fleets of speculative ideas sailing under the scientific equivalent of the skull and crossbones. At the very least, these challenges to scientific orthodoxy will surely prove an encouragement for forteans and individual thinkers everywhere. FT

NOTES

1 "The Acoustic Properties of Unexplained Rapping Sounds", *Journal of the Society for Psychical* Research, vol.73.2 no.899 pp65–93, April 2010. See **FT265:5**.

2 Daryl J Bem: "Feeling the Future: Experimental Evidence for Anomalous Retroactive Influences on Cognition and Affect". A version has also been published by Bem on his personal website: See http://bit.ly/drDhhq (dbem.ws); **FT270:4**.

3 http://bit.ly/fJOBBl (csicop.org).

4 Dean Radin's blog Entangled Minds: http://bit.ly/fYMAPN (deanradin.blogspot.com).

5 See http://bit.ly/bXKPAb (richardwiseman.com).

6 *New Scientist*, 20 Nov 2010.

7 Eric-Jan Wagenmakers, Ruud Wetzels, Denny Boorsboom & Han van de Maas: "Why psychologists must change the way they analyze their data: The case of Psi", at: http://bit.ly/c5fn3F (ruudwetzels.com). Bayesian analysis involves an assessment of conditional probabilities using Bayes Theorem which originated with the Rev. Thomas Bayes, a dissenting minister from Tunbridge Wells and which was presented posthumously to the Royal Society in 1763.

8 *Ibid*, note 7, footnote 2.

9 See AG Cairns Smith: *Evolving the Mind*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

10 Immanuel Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, 2007 ed., Palgrave Macmillan; Bryan Magee: *Confessions of a Philosopher*, 1997.

11 G Spencer Brown: "Statistical Significance in Psychical Research", *Nature*, vol. 172, No.4369, 25 July 1954.

12 Christopher Scott: "G Spencer Brown and Probability: A Critique", *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* vol.39 pp217–34, 1957.

13 Author's copy of a letter from CJ Jung to Tony Cornell, 9 Feb 1960.

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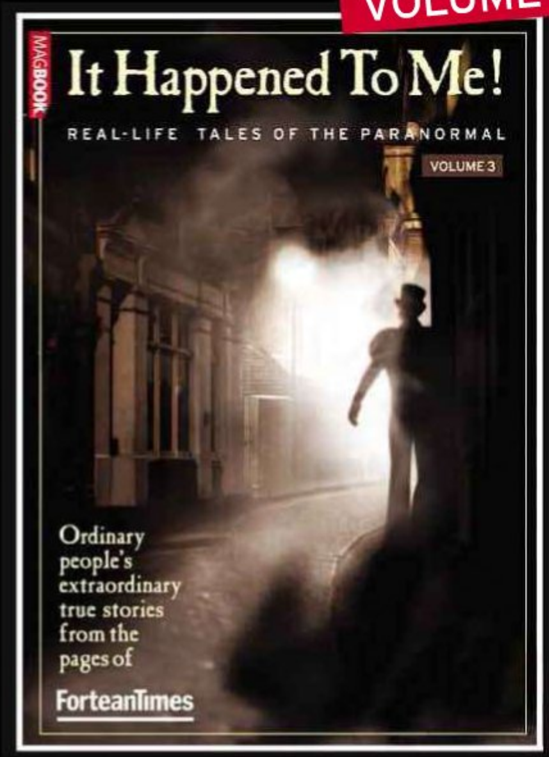
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Coghlan and Bartley

PAUL SIEVEKING traces the dubious roots of two classic yarns of the sea.

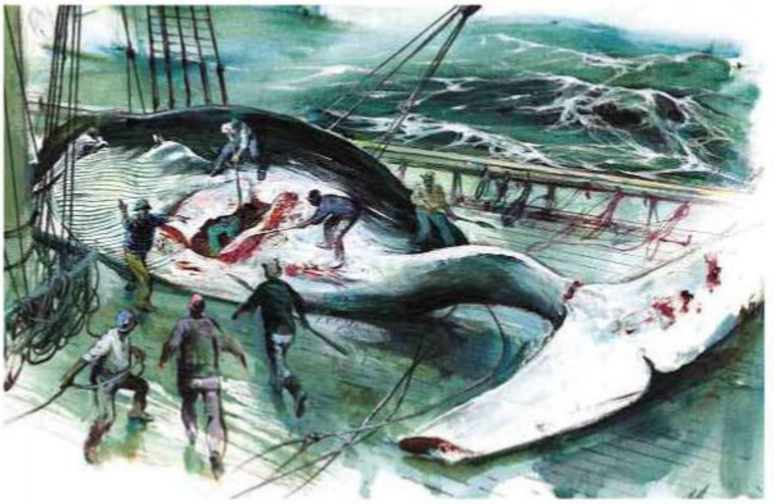
PAUL SIEVEKING is *FT*'s founding co-editor and has a particular interest in the extremes of human behaviour and the dynamics of contemporary legend dissemination.

The story of Coghlan's floating coffin, related in *World of Wonder* magazine [**FT272:50**], has been recycled many times – for example in *Invisible Horizons* (1965) by Vincent Gaddis – and is currently presented as fact by many websites.

Charles Francis Coghlan was born in 1841 – according to Gaddis, on Prince Edward Island in the Gulf of St Lawrence, Canada. Considered one of the greatest Shakespearean actors of his day, he toured America with his own company for some years, falling ill in Galveston, Texas, where he died on 27 November 1899. His body was interred in a lead coffin inside a granite vault at a local cemetery. In the terrible hurricane that devastated Galveston on 8 September 1900, many caskets, including Coghlan's, were swept out into the Gulf of Mexico.

According to Gaddis, Coghlan's coffin turned up eight years later and 3,000 miles (4,830km) away. It had allegedly been carried southeast round Florida and then north with the Gulf Stream. In October 1908, fishermen setting their nets discovered a large box drifting towards Prince Edward Island. They towed it to shore and, chipping away a crust of barnacles, revealed a coffin plate bearing the name Charles Coghlan, a name well known on the island. Only a few miles away was the village where he had been born and raised, and here he was interred for the last time.

A great yarn certainly – but, alas, not true. For a start, Coghlan was born to wealthy Irish parents in Paris, not Canada. His connection with Prince Edward Island was that he established a summer home there, on a farm at Fortune Bay. His coffin was indeed washed out to sea following the Texas hurricane, and his daughter Gertrude spent a fortune in a vain attempt to locate his remains. Then on 15 September 1927 she found her father the subject of Ripley's "Believe It Or Not" cartoon in the Long Island *Evening Post*, with the story of how the coffin returned "home".



ABOVE: Harvesting the wealth of the sea aboard a 19th-century whaler, with an unexpected bonus – the still-living body of "modern Jonah" James Bartley found in the stomach. Sadly, none of the details of the account stood up to investigation.

RENÉ FOLLET

Ripley's source was *A Player Under Three Reigns* (1925), the memoirs of Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson. A telegram to the actor in London brought the response: "Where I got the statement about my friend's body I have no idea, but I distinctly remember it was given me by one in whom I had confidence. Indeed, I think two people told me the story." Gertrude also made contact with her father's manager, George Tyler, who said he had heard the story a number of times, but couldn't recall from whom.

About the time of the Galveston storm, an actor called Charles P Flockton died in Los Angeles. He had requested cremation and the interment of his ashes at his property on Abel's Cape, Fortune Bay, Prince Edward Island. A sandstone monument marks the spot. It seems that someone conflated Charles Coghlan and Charles Flockton. *Main source: Article by Dwight Whalen in 'Fate' magazine, Mar 1979, pp.88–92.*

Another yarn featured in *World of Wonder*, popular with biblical literalists, is James Bartley and the Whale [**FT272:50**], which seemingly first appeared in print in the (Norfolk) *Yarmouth Mercury* on 22 August 1891. In February 1891, we are told, the whaler *Star of the East* was near the Falkland Islands when a large sperm whale was sighted and two whale boats lowered in pursuit. One boat was struck by the whale and its crew thrown overboard; one man drowned and James Bartley disappeared. The whale was harpooned by the second boat and flensed alongside the whaler. Next morning the stomach was hoisted on deck and cut open, revealing Bartley, unconscious but alive. His face, neck and hands, not protected by his clothes, were bleached a deathly white by his 16-hour ordeal in the whale's gastric juices, making him look "parboiled". When he came round he was "raving mad", but he recovered his senses within three weeks, though his skin retained its "ghastly pallor". A variant narrative claims Bartley spent 36 hours in the whale.

While a sperm whale could swallow a man with ease, it is unlikely that anyone could stay in its stomach for so long without suffocating. It was not normal practice in 19th-century sperm whale fishery to haul the stomach aboard the vessel. Once the blubber and head had been removed, and the intestines stabbed with a cutting spade to check for ambergris, the carcass was cast adrift to sink.

Research has found a British-registered iron barque called *Star of the East* which left Auckland, New Zealand, for New York on 27 December 1890, and so could have been near the Falklands the following February – but it wasn't a whaler; Bartley is not listed among the crew; Mrs Killam, the captain's wife, is on record as saying: "There is not one word of truth in the whale story"; and whaling off the Falklands did not commence until 1909. One account refers to Bartley working as a cobbler in his native Gloucester and being buried there, with a headstone reading "James Bartley – 1870 to 1909 – a modern Jonah"; but a careful search of local records found no trace of Bartley or his grave. So it looks as if this story too is apocryphal. I would be delighted to be proved wrong.

Weekend, 3–9 Oct 1973; "A Whale of a Tale: Fundamentalist Fish Stories" by Prof. Edward B Davis (Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith, 43:224–237, 1991); Mariners' Mirror (Journal of the Society for Nautical Research), v.79, no.1, 1993; Gloucester Citizen, 14 Nov 2002. FT

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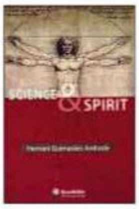
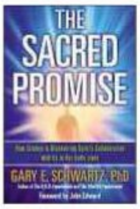
reviews

Examining the excluded middle

A Brazilian engineer and an American academic make the case for closer cooperation between scientists and experiencers of paranormal phenomena





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Hernani Andrade (1913–2003) was an engineer, founder of Brazil's Institute for Psychobiophysical Research (IBPP) and author of 16 books based on its research into 75 cases. Gary Schwarz is an American professor of medicine, surgery, psychology, psychiatry and neurology at the University of Arizona and a director of its research into Advances in Consciousness and Health. These veterans of psychical research plead for closer cooperation between scientists, on the one hand, and the eclectic group of mediums, spiritists, researchers and experiencers of paranormal phenomena on the other.

As Guy Lyon Playfair concedes in his introduction to Andrade, both sides often see the middle ground as dangerous to their reputations; its atmosphere of mutual hostility precludes productive debate. In recent decades, a spotlight has been shone on "institutional prejudice" about racism and sexuality; yet public debate about prejudice within science about matters deemed "beyond the pale" is less vocal. The pale – originally, a staked fence – became a symbolic boundary between civilisation and the Wilderness; between what is allowed and what is not; between the known and the fearful unknown. As 19th-century scientific materialism arose, scientists became its self-appointed guardians, defining the rational and irrational, sense and nonsense.

Charles Fort was not alone in satirising the 'club' of Science, whose pedagogues behaved more like the priests of a religion and whose authority rested upon their reputation. Their pomposity made them easy targets. Both authors quote an unnamed but inglorious scientist who, when confronted with a well-documented psi-related phenomenon, declared: "I wouldn't believe that even if it were true". To be fair, there are examples of collaboration, and both books concentrate on them, showing what can be done when both camps acknowledge the other's commitment to advancing our knowledge and understanding of anomalous phenomena, and our experience of them. This shared intent is key, even when the goal is approached by different routes.

> **One unnamed scientist is said to have declared: "I wouldn't believe that even if it were true"**

Playfair explains that for more than four decades Andrade, as "a highly qualified scientist and a lifelong Spiritist", worked for a change in such attitudes but was little known outside Brazil. Presented here are three IBPP chapter-long studies demonstrating that spiritists can work scientifically and methodically: a poltergeist case involving falls of stones and spontaneous fires over several years; a set of 'communications' received by a medium from a young soldier who died some 30 years earlier; and a young girl with 'memories' of being a man who had died five years before she was born. All are investigated in meticulous detail, with careful record-keeping and patient detective work. They include examinations of alternative theories such as self-deception, cryptomnesia, fraud, prior knowledge, and telepathic communication with someone with relevant knowledge. A fourth chapter sets out Andrade's theory about 'psychobiophysics', the likely interactions between physical matter and "psi matter" through "biomagnetic fields" and the "biological organising model".

Schwarz divides his book not by types of phenomena but by what he has learned from them that suggests the intervention of Spirit, by which he means manifestations of "a higher spiritual reality". Accordingly, there are three main groups of intervention by 'Spirit': 'willful intent', assistance during healing, and the eponymous 'promise' of increasing stages of co-operation. Much of Schwarz's material deals with apparent interactions with 'angels' and 'spirits', terms which might be unpalatable to orthodox science but which represent nodes of non-corporeal organising intelligence. Schwarz even offers guidance on how to prove this to yourself, which is quite different to proving it scientifically.

At this point, the obstacles to rapprochement become clearer. Both men are committed spiritists; they have proved to themselves that 'something' in the phenomenon of Spirit intervention deserves to be scientifically investigated. Many of these experiences involve subjective elements of 'meaningfulness' and coincidence, words which are red rags to materialist bulls. Yet there is a good list of prominent scientists who have thought otherwise and concluded, or at least accepted, that humans have a spiritual nature and that not all spiritual experience is an illusion based upon misperception and misunderstanding.

Psychics, spiritists and the like – and society at large – too often feel that scientists automatically reject any inference of what non-scientists may refer to (for want of a better description) as the supernatural or paranormal.

The honest message here is that if you don't take a serious, impartial look, you cannot judge whether something genuine, however minimal, is going on. You may overlook a new field of science, new understanding or even new laws. I am reminded of the quote by William James often used by William Corliss (in his anomaly *Sourcebooks*): "Anyone will renovate his science who will steadily look after the irregular phenomena".

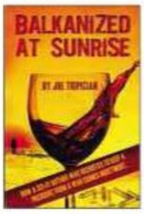
Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict

TWO BOOKS WITH AN EQUALLY VALID TAKE ON THE PARANORMAL 8

Balkan mad

A broke science fiction writer attempts a career change with a political biography



Balkanized at Sunrise

How a Sci-Fi Author was Recruited to Keep a President From a War Crimes Indictment

Joe Tripician

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In 1997, film-maker and science fiction writer Joe Tripician was on the verge of post-divorce bankruptcy and surviving on canapés from gallery openings. His doctor had been asked by "some broad [he] was banging" to find a script doctor for a travelogue by Jakov Sedler, Croatia's Minister of Culture.

Sedler, the director of *Gospa*, a film about Medjugorje starring Martin Sheen, is described as the Leni Riefenstahl of Croatia "but without the talent". Sedler also needed help with the script of a film biography of Franjo Tudjman, the President of Croatia, and then the big project: a book about Tudjman for US consumption which would, went the thinking, help keep him out of the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague.

Tripician, author of *The Official Alien Abductee's Handbook: How to Recover from Alien Abduction without Hypnotherapy, Crystals or CIA Surveillance*, was not the obvious choice of political biographer, but $40k, a proper journalistic assignment and the optimistic hope that he would produce a work of historical importance swung it for Tripician. The Croatian government was just glad to have found a writer – any writer… He negotiated total artistic control and copyright reversion so he could publish the book should his Croatian paymasters decide not to.

A Yale professor warns him that he is "miserably unqualified to write any book about the Balkans". It would "be a total embarrassment" and he would become "an international laughing stock". With this endorsement ringing in his ears, he jumped into the project.

George Rudman answered an ad for a paid researcher. He had a tolerant view of genocide ("You kill my relative; I burn your house. You burn my house; I slaughter your village") and a crammed address book. Tripician's anti-George was a young left-wing snowboarder called Ivo. Sedler set up endless interviews with government officials ("Never have I been lied to by so many people in such a short period of time") and treats ("lunch – at mass graves"), and arranged a meeting with Tudjman. Then Tripician meets his own Deep Throat, 'The Priest', who has documents linking Tudjman with war crimes. They never emerge, but it became clear how hard the Croatian government was working to prevent their president facing the War Crimes Tribunal. It also became clear that anything critical of Tudjman would inflame Croatians, and the Western press would dismiss the book as a snow job by an apologist for neo-fascists, and a non-historian to boot.

The book was never published. The promised contact with Harper Collins didn't exist anyway. Shortly after Tudjman's death, Tripician sent all his interviews to the War Crimes Tribunal. George probably freelanced for the CIA. In 2009, Sedler announced a new film featuring Britney Spears.

William Darragh

Fortean Times Verdict
WRITING ABOUT ALIENS IS NO PREPARATION FOR REALPOLITIK **8**

Australian Big Cats

An Unnatural History of Panthers

Michael Williams & Rebecca Lang

Strange Nation Publishing 2010
Pb, 435pp, illus, appxs, ind, £20.20,
ISBN 9780646530079

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £20.20

It's difficult to know whether to relish the differences between the Australian ABC phenomenon and our own, or the similarities. This well researched and written tome provides meat for both perspectives.

Just like our own mystery big cats, theirs come mostly in black, with fawn running second, and the usual mélange of odd colours, along with lions and many frankly indeterminate species, thrown in to confound any simple theory as to their provenance. It's a provenance subject to the same speculations as ours – the mascots of GIs in the war, the escapees from private zoos, and even that great staple of Explanationism – the circus van or train crash. The authors have diligently dug out what evidence they can find – and much of it is bolder, brasher and more brightly coloured than ours – a train crash witness, for example, and even a stuffed puma, allegedly shot in Victoria in the 1960s.

Surprisingly, Australia has more accounts of black and fawn big cats from the 19th century, the early days of Australian settlement, than we do. The Emmaville Panther cat-flap of the 1940s and 50s, in New South Wales, likewise predates our 'Surrey Puma' cat-flap by a decade. One of the most interesting investigations was by David O'Reilly who, in his book *Savage Shadow*, recorded the depredations of an ABC in the Blue Mountains area of Western Australia in the 1970s. Williams and Lang take up the story, citing modern sightings of the 'Coupan' – so named for its combination of cougar and panther-like qualities – from the same region, and the same fruitless hunts for it.

Just as here, the reports of reliable witnesses contrast with the paucity of tangible evidence for ABCs; though it is entertaining to see the standard black blobs photographed against the wild landscape of the outback, as against leafy Surrey – and whereas we have sheep kills, they have cleanly-consumed kangaroos.

Unique to their continent, however, is a First Nation whose legends and experiences include encounters with otherworldly predators such as the cat-like 'Gubba' and the 'Warrigal'. Could the Coupan and his kind be related? Or could the Oz ABCs be a relict population of the marsupial lion, *Thylacoleo carnifex*, supposedly extinct for 30,000 years?

The authors' even-handed, open-minded approach provides ample evidence for the theories they touch upon. They devote a quarter of this compendious book to appendices: witness statements, dismissive government reports and so on, so that interested readers can make up their own minds. This is a first-rate fortean classic, fastidiously sourced, and essential reading for all students of the ABC phenomenon.

Merrily Harpur

Fortean Times Verdict
EVEN-HANDED AND WELL REFERENCED GUIDE TO OZ ABCS **9**

The Myth and Mystery of UFOs

Thomas E Bullard

University Press of Kansas 2010
Pb, 398pp, illus, notes, bib, $34.95/£30.95, ISBN 9780700617296

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £27.85

Carl Jung incorporated UFOs into the historic folklore of millennia. Jacques Vallée even suggested that they serve as catalysts inspiring modern folklore and belief systems, for unknown reasons.

Carrying on from there is this masterful book. Seldom has there been such a careful and exhaustive cataloguing of UFOs as historic, modern, spiritual, cultural and pop myth. The author concludes that there may be a worldwide predisposition to overlay belief narratives, but that in the end there is a real unexplained phenomenon.

Bullard's only fault is that he may imbue too much meaning to every aspect of the field, particularly abductions; he gets pedantic at times. For example, he writes that alien abductors "are disturbing not just for reasons of xenophobia but because they foreshadow an alienated human future." And here was I thinking they were disturbing because they kidnapped and tortured people.

Most of the book concentrates on reports with strong dramatic elements. After all, a folk story needs a beginning, middle and end. The vast majority of accounts – even close encounters with "high strangeness" – are, therefore, short-changed. This is forgivable, given the book's importance and the author's expertise.

Bullard is a PhD folklorist who previously wrote two volumes on the abduction experience. Perhaps understandably, he seems to get caught up in all the endless variations of centuries of abduction tales. (There are so many versions of the changeling myth that the standard alien-oriented account appears staid by contrast, arguing for its "reality" in some fashion, or at least contamination by investigators.)

Along the way, Bullard postulates a modern society that "inhabits a virtual reality created by the media and internet, where information overload leaves consensus impossible and authority dead. No longer able to trust government or science, people negotiate individual truths based on political rather than scientific criteria."

As far as nuts-and-bolts theorists go, in other words, there can never be a UFO 'truth' because we've gone back to a pre-Enlightenment definition of verity. That may not help us understand things in the sky, but it goes a long way toward explaining denials of global warming, the Zeta-Reticulan queen, deniers of Barack Obama's Hawaiian birth and much of the American Tea Party movement. Besides watching the skies, we should also be very closely watching the Earth.

Jay Rath

Fortean Times Verdict

A MASTERFUL LOOK AT UNIDENTIFIED FOLKLORE OBJECTS 9

Responding to the sky

A stunningly erudite guide to star-gazing moves effortlessly from Babylonian astrology to atomic clocks via ancient cosmologies

Bryan E. Penprase
The Power of Stars
How Celestial Observations Have Shaped Civilization
Springer

The Power of Stars

How Celestial Observations Have Shaped Civilization

Bryan E Penprase

Springer 2011

Hb, 347pp, illus, bib, notes, ind, £36.71,
ISBN 9781441968029

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £33.04

Samuel Johnson quipped that an author turns "over half a library to make one book". *The Power of Stars* gives the impression that Penprase turned over the equivalent of half the British Library. It's rarely been my pleasure to read a book of such expansive, eloquent erudition.

Penprase takes you from Babylonian astrology to the baryomic fraction – the proportion of ordinary (as opposed to dark) matter – by way of Native American, Ancient Egyptian, traditional Chinese and Mayan cosmologies. He tells a story that begins with a 33,000-year-old bone fragment that may show marks representing the lunar cycle and ends with modern atomic clocks that lose a second in 100 million years.

He draws on, *inter alia*, anthropology, archæology, mythology, cosmology and astrophysics to illustrate the plethora of ways humans throughout history "responded to the sky" – sometimes "with fear, sometimes with great artistry and other times with great rationality". Indeed, some ancient responses seem remarkably prescient. For instance, Chinese Hsuan Yeh cosmology, according to a document written around AD 300, argues that the stars are "condensed vapour" freely floating in a "dark and infinite space".

Throughout the book, the author inspires you to view the nocturnal sky with new eyes. When they looked at the Big Dipper, ancient Egyptians saw a bull's leg – the same shape as the implement used during the "opening of the mouth" mummification ceremony. The Micmac tribe in Nova Scotia saw a bear (the bowl) pursued by hunters, including the Robin, Chickadee and Blue Jay. The Chumash tribe in California saw a group of boys turned into geese, the Babylonians and Northern Europeans perceived a wagon, the latter case pulled by oxen or horses. When you next look at the Dipper, you'll see what they mean.

The Power of Stars will fascinate everyone from the most hardened scientific materialist to astrologers to ancient astronaut advocates. Penprase eloquently examines the perennial favourites such as the Nazca lines, the Orion mystery and Stonehenge as well as many lesser-known examples, such as the ancient Norse site of Lindholm Hoje in Denmark, which underscores the dangers of overinterpretation. Dozens of stones at Lindholm Hoje show important astronomical alignments. But archæologists believe that the stones outline the shape of Norse warships rather than pointing at stars – any alignments are probably accidental. And anyone interested in astrology should read the outstanding geographical and historical overview of the various traditions worldwide, although Penprase eloquently summarises the case against the discipline. He notes, for example, that the progression of the birth signs in papers is thousands of years out of date due to the precession of the equinox.

I can't begin to express my admiration for Penprase's impressive scholarship. Despite the price, the book deserves a place in every fortean's bookcase. It's an excellent introduction to a fascinating area, reflecting the author's experience teaching a course on "archæoastronomy and world cosmology" for almost 15 years at Pomona College, California. *The Power of Stars* is accessible, presented as easily digestible chunks and supported with copious illustrations. Nevertheless, Penprase piles fact on fact, insight on insight, example on example: his enthusiasm is almost tangible. So, if you are new to archæoastronomy, you'll probably want to take the book slowly to stop the wealth of information overwhelming you. I've been reading around the area for more than 30 years and it still took me twice as long to read as I'd expect a book of this length. Rather like a painting by Pieter Brueghel, you need to look take your time to appreciate the detail.

Penrose illustrates how "the response of ancient people to the power of stars speaks to us across the centuries with a mysterious voice which resonates within us and somehow moves us". *The Power of Stars* is a fascinating testament to that endearing fascination. Very highly recommended.

Mark Greener

Fortean Times Verdict

A SUPERB BOOK THAT SHOULD FASCINATE EVERY FORTEAN 10

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We accept all major credit and debit cards including Switch & Amex. Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to the FT Bookshop. Delivery is 7–10 days, subject to availability. Postage & packing is free within the UK.

Here's a Who

Doctor Who fans can luxuriate in an engaging radiophonic podcast drama

The Minister of Chance

Episode One – The Broken World

Radio Static

Podcast, £1.49

AVAILABLE FROM WWW.MINISTEROFCHANCE.COM

You won't find the latest *Doctor Who* spin-off in the TV listings; *The Minister of Chance* is, in the words of its creators, "a radiophonic serial". In other words, it's a continuing audio drama in the form of a downloadable podcast.

The series opens in another time, in another world, in a local pub where, in typical *Who* fashion, the regulars speak in northern accents. Suddenly, a stranger appears from a box larger on the inside than the outside. At this point *Who* fans, myself included, will start to writhe with excitement. No, it's not the Doctor, but an equally cocky Time Lord called the Minister of Chance. Very quickly, things escalate from a search for a missing scientist to matters of international diplomacy, and unanswered questions start to pile up by the dozen.

Cut to Ambassador Durian (played by none other than eighth Doctor, Paul McGann) of the invading Sezuan forces, blackmailing the king of Tanto with his oily charm and military superiority, and without, it transpires, any authorisation. And this is where the medium of high-tech audio-drama actually surpasses the cranky old television – because instead of the by now almost obligatory CGI battle scene, we are treated to one of the most eloquent, non-violent invasions ever devised. While TV viewers are easily placated with explosions, chases and gadgets, good storytelling is the key to holding a radio audience, and it's central to the appeal of *Minister of Chance*.

The world created in the series is a highly engaging one. The invading Sezuan are a race of magicians in a world where science is outlawed for the good of the people. However, the Sezuan do secretly employ captured enemy scientists in the hope of developing the fabled 'ballistic missile'; the greater good justifies this act of heresy, and the missile will supposedly only be used as a deterrent. It's a world in which rationality and superstition are inverted, in which "raving scientists" and their "æthereal musings" are pitted against the practical uses of magic spells.

The voice acting – from a cast including not just McGann but Sylvestor McCoy (the seventh Doctor), Paul Darrow and Jenny Agutter – is top-notch, the sound design highly effective and the script completely faithful to the blunt but witty style of *Doctor Who*. And if the eponymous Minister (Julian Wadham) sounds familiar, that's because he first appeared (voiced by Stephen Fry) in the 2001 webcast *Death Comes to Time*, the director of which, Dan Freeman, has written, produced and directed this follow-up.

It's rare that I find myself so completely wrapped up in a series as this, but I really want to know what happens next. However, an ominous message on the Minister of Chance website reminds us that unless enough copies are sold, the Radio Static team cannot afford to finish the series. You can download the Prologue for free, and Episode One ('The Broken World') for £1.49 from www.ministerofchance.com.

George Binning

Fortean Times Verdict

THOROUGHLY ENJOYABLE DRAMA FOR *WHO* FANS EVERYWHERE **8**

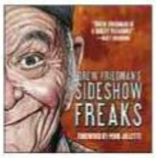
Drew Friedman's Sideshow Freaks

Drew Friedman

Blast Books 2011

Hb, $19.95, ISBN 9780922233366

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £9.99

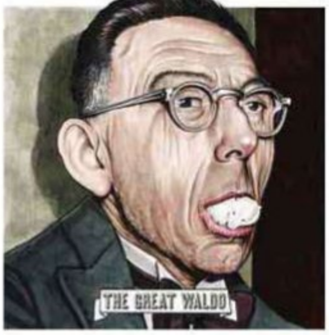


The portraits in this book get the quality of the subjects' skin just right, like high-definition television, even the one with *ichthyosis* – the one who carnival talkers would call 'The Alligator Boy'. He is joined by living specimens of *phocomelia* ('The Penguin Girl'), *ectodactyly* ('The Lobster Boy'), and the many forms of *hypertrichosis* (Percilla Bejano, 'The Monkey Girl'; Julia Pastrana, 'The Ape Woman'; and 'Jo-Jo the Dog-Faced Boy').

Award-winning illustrator Drew Friedman offers two 'Human Torsos', and both limbless men liked to roll cigarettes with their lips. There are two human skeletons, each of whom married a fat lady. And there are portraits of both women (Betty Green and Minnie Woolsey) who assumed the role of 'Koo Koo the Bird Girl'.

Although the limited text describes the performers using correct medical terminology, it does not devote any space to being politically correct or explaining that the life they chose was not exploitative.

The author and artist mentions the speculation about the mental abilities of microcephalics, but relates that one of the most famous 'pinheads', William Johnson, said to his sister on his deathbed: "Well, we fooled them for a long time, didn't we?" The abbreviated biographies don't tell the whole story, but other sources do, so the picture of Grady Stiles just notes that the 'Lobster Boy' deteriorated into an abusive alcoholic, leading to tragic murderous consequences.



There are trivia that may have escaped even the well-read freakophile. 'Half-boy' Johnny Eck conducted a Baltimore orchestra, 555lb (250kg) Dolly Dimples became a diet guru after slimming down to 112lb (50kg) and three-legged Frank Lentini fathered four children with his two working sets of genitals.

I was gratified to know the back-stories of some of the iconic acts. Here is the young giant Eddie Carmel, who was famously photographed by Diane Arbus in 1970. There is Grace McDaniels, the 'Mule-Faced Woman', who caused audience members to faint when she lifted her veil to reveal her admittedly ugly visage. And pictured alive are two (or rather three) sideshow headliners whose earthly remnants are curated by my favourite, the Mütter Museum: 'Windbag Man', whose dried and inflated colon is on display; and 'The Original Siamese Twins', whose joined livers reside beneath a plaster cast of their torsos.

This square volume is dedicated to Tod Browning, director of the 1932 film *Freaks*, in which many of these subjects appeared. My friend, sideshow historian James Taylor, is acknowledged. The foreword is written by magician Penn Gilette, who uses similes like "deader than a doornail up Melvin Burkhart's nose".

In addition to "up the nose" there is "down the hatch": The Great Waldo, the regurgitator who swallowed and coughed up live mice. You may be less familiar with Eko and Iko, dreadlocked African-American albinos from Virginia who were passed off as spacemen or cannibals from Ecuador. And you may not be aware that the conjoined Galyon Brothers, now in their 60s, are still alive.

This book is a head-turner – and there is one of those too. A portrait depicts Martin Laurello, the 'Human Owl', performing his act in which he turned his head around to face backwards.

Christine Quigley

Fortean Times Verdict

A HEAD-TURNER OF A BOOK FOR THE FORTEAN COFFEE TABLE **8**

Sci-fi and fantasy round-up

David V Barrett on a forest with a purpose, conduits from another world, a supernatural murder detective, a priest turned PI and a welcome Philip K Dick reissue

Sylvow
Douglas Thompson

Eibonvale 2010
Pb, 307pp, £8.99, ISBN 9780956214775
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £8.99

Past Tense
Nick Marsh

Immanion Press 2010
Pb, 234pp, £11.99, ISBN 9781904853756
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.99

Rivers of London
Ben Aaronovitch

Gollancz 2011
Hb, 392pp, £12.99, ISBN 9780575097568
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69

Secrets of the Fire Sea
Stephen Hunt

HarperVoyager 2011
Pb, 439pp, £7.99, ISBN 9780007289660
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £7.59

The Transmigration of Timothy Archer
Philip K Dick

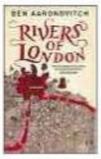
Gollancz 2011
Pb, 249pp, £7.99, ISBN 9780575099012
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £7.59

As the major publishers seem to be owned by massive multinationals, I thought it worth looking at a couple of books from small presses. Immanion Press, run by fantasy writer Storm Constantine, has published some 70 books; Eibonvale Press only a dozen books so far. Eibonvale's books have beautifully designed covers, but the books from both publishers display a common binding problem with small-press paperbacks: covers that spring up, and wavy pages.

Showing the influence of both JG Ballard and Rob Holdstock, Douglas Thompson's *Sylvow* is about a town set in the midst of an ancient forest somewhere in northern Europe. Some years ago, Leo walked out into the forest; now his wife and sister go searching for him.

The forest seems to have a purpose of its own, almost an intelligence; first with huge insects, then with aggressive plants, it reaches into the town, nature fighting back against man's depredations. The novel suffers a little in flow by being a "fix-up" from previously published stories, but Thompson's descriptions of the raw power of nature are outstanding.

In Nick Marsh's *Past Tense*, Alan is a Conduit, a link between the material and the soul worlds on Earth. He discovers that Conduits from other worlds are being murdered by a being from another dimension. With a friend, he travels back to Roman Britain to stop this creature changing Earth's history to become supremely powerful. It's an interesting enough plot, but any sense of suspense or fear is dispelled by the lightweight, over-casual style of writing, spattered with undergrad humour and with overblown similes on every other page. The novel would also have benefited from proofreading.



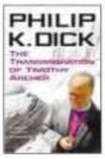
In contrast, Ben Aaronovitch's *Rivers of London* shows how a lightly humorous SF/fantasy novel should be written: underplay the humour, and don't put up a big flashing sign shouting "JOKE" every few pages. PC Peter Grant is just about to qualify as a copper when he interviews a witness to a murder in Covent Garden – who happens to be a ghost. Grant is recruited by a small but long-established branch of the Metropolitan Police to work on supernatural cases, and starts training to use magic.

The novel follows his uncertain progress, which includes investigating an increasingly nasty string of murders in the streets of London while also negotiating between the traditional magical powers-that-be in charge of London's rivers – a family of traveller men upstream of Teddington Lock, and Mama Thames and her most splendidly stroppy family of African women for the Thames and all its tributaries in London itself. It's gruesome, great fun and very nicely written. It also has wonderful cover art from Stephen Walter's amazing map of London, 'The Island' (see http://bit.ly/9R4PH8).

SECRETS OF THE FIRE SEA
STEPHEN HUNT

Secrets of the Fire Sea is set in a world which has humans, ursine people and steam-powered rude mechanicals, and a religion of logic and reason and no gods. When the archbishop is brutally murdered in her own cathedral, a former priest (now a private investigator) is called in to find her killers. But this is far more than an SF detective story. The High Master of the Guild of Valvemen, the engineers who keep the island city of Jago running, is determined that Hannah, the archbishop's orphaned teenage ward, will work as a labourer in the turbine halls instead of training for the priesthood herself. But then a young post-grad student comes from another country, to study what Hannah's dead parents had been investigating: a weapon in the country's mythology, or possibly history, so devastating that all knowledge of it had to be destroyed. All these interwoven elements are just the beginning of a fascinating and complex story.

I was quite critical of Stephen Hunt's first novel, *The Court of the Air*, set in the same world, when I reviewed it here three years ago, for overdoing the weird and wonderful and throwing so many marvels at the reader that the story itself was overwhelmed. This time he's got the balance right. An excellent read.



The hugely prolific Philip K Dick wrote some astonishing SF novels as well as a fair few potboilers; but towards the end of his life he wrote three very unusual novels on Gnostic spiritual philosophy. Published shortly after his death in 1982, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* was the last, following *Valis* and *The Divine Invasion*. Full marks to Gollancz for reissuing it now.

Timothy Archer is an Episcopalian bishop, loosely based on the real-life Bishop James Pike of California, who was a friend of Dick. He begins to lose his faith – or at least to change it dramatically – when Gnostic Zadokite scrolls are found which show that some of Jesus's teachings pre-date him by a century or more. This is a novel about belief and doubt, about faith and facts, about consensus reality and alternative realities, about disjunctions between the literal and the metaphorical, about the nature of sanity, but perhaps most of all about reason – partly in regard to all of these, but also to the value of reasoned thinking. For all these reasons, it's a deeply fortean work. The novel is also all about death. It begins on the day John Lennon is killed, and three of its main characters are already dead at the start: the bishop, his mistress and his son, who was married to the novel's narrator. Like Bishop Pike, Bishop Archer dies in the deserts of Israel, searching for the truth. But does life continue after death – the transmigration of the title? This isn't a light read, but it's a novel that well repays the effort.

This is my last SF and fantasy column in the pages of *FT* – but I'm happy to say that it will continue on the website at www.forteantimes.com.

Lords of illusion

John-Ivan Palmer talks to **JIM STEINMEYER** about Houdini, hypnotism and the continuing allure of the secret world of stage magic.

There are certain things you are not supposed to know. One of them is a magician's secrets. Jim Steinmeyer not only knows how all the tricks are done, he knows all the skeletons in the magician's closet. As a historian, he has perhaps delved deeper than anyone into the ultimate underground culture – professional stage magic. In *Art and Artifice* (1998), he brought the whole concept of theatrical illusion under philosophical study. Other books followed, including *Charles Fort: The Man Who Invented The Supernatural* (2007). His latest title, *The Last Greatest Magician in the World: Howard Thurston Versus Houdini & the Battles of the American Wizards*, is being praised by critics as a masterpiece of biography and psychological analysis. In this interview, I asked him about this secret world few people have seen or even imagined.

ABOVE: Howard Thurston (left) and Harry Houdini, who fell out over spiritualist mediums.

MIKE CAVENEY EGYPTIAN HALL COLLECTION

Fortean Times: **In your current book, you write that magicians have a debilitating relationship with secrets. What do you mean by that?**

Jim Steinmeyer: If you get to a certain level inside the world of magicians, you understand that secrets don't have importance. They're at the root silly. There's no secret in magic that goes beyond a fourth grade science class. They're interchangeable, and what you're really after is presentation. But if you're in that world a little longer, you realise that's hogwash. The really great magicians like Thurston and Houdini and Kellar worked hard to get brilliant secrets and valued those secrets tremendously. When that happens, everything changes. What's debilitating is the energy that magicians put into keeping the exposure of these secrets from deflating the audience's interest. People always ask how it's done and if you tell them it's just a piece of fabric, they say: "Is that all?" And so what was intriguing is now incredibly dull. It's that sort of thing that magicians guard against. Magicians are constantly reassessing those secrets. They're told to ignore them, then told to treasure them – and so they're doing both those things at one time. They greatly value the secret and dismiss the secret. It's a balancing act.

FT: **Did you always see stage magic with such a deep perspective?**

JS: I was always fascinated with magic, although I never actually performed illusions with the big props. I realised there were fascinating stories about people who spent their lives devoted to the art of illusion. Part of that is the secrecy of it. The world of magicians is crazy and irrational. The people who are drawn to it are slightly illogical; but it does have that artisan quality, whether you consider it a fine art or not. It has that mania where someone spends their whole life bringing illusions to the public.

Houdini was his own Barnum and his own freak. He had the product.

FT: **You have shown that the public quickly forgets magicians like Thurston, Kellar, Selbit, Devant. The only magician who seems to have lodged in the collective memory is Houdini. Yet Houdini was not a good magician. Why the contradiction?**

JS: I was astonished that I had ruffled the feathers of Houdini fans with my book. They're out there with baseball bats. I give Houdini a tremendous amount of credit for forging a new act and being a new kind of celebrity. What he *doesn't* deserve credit for is being a brilliant and clever magician. Period. He was known as an escape artist, a daredevil and for his historical research in magic among his peers, but his contemporaries didn't regard his magic highly. He came across as rough around the edges, which worked to his advantage as an escape artist. He was an incredible self-publicist. Someone once said that Houdini was his own Barnum and his own freak. He had the product and knew how to promote it. He petitioned Funk & Wagnalls to get his name into the dictionary. He was one of the first performers to have a publicist after he died. His wife hired an old circus publicity agent who promoted him after his death for many years. He was the first kind of modern celebrity. I would also say that's why he's not interesting. I could turn on *American Idol* and see the same thing. We endure Sara Palin's Tweets. We know what they'll do to get on television. What we don't know is people like Howard Thurston who had the most unbelievable show business material. He didn't care about getting his name in the dictionary. He wanted to sell tickets to get people into the theatre. When he died, his name started fading. When Houdini died, his name increased.

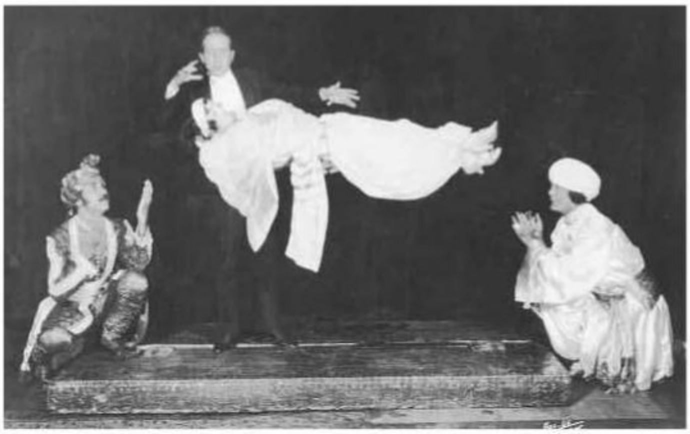
FT: **Did you find it difficult at first to get your philosophical approach to magic noticed?**

JS: Oh, sure! I had a great friend, a writer named Tim Onosko. I worked with him at Disney. At that time, I was writing historical books about magic for magicians, published by magic publishers. I had written a book called *Art & Artifice*, which was a collection of rarefied essays about stage illusions. He picked up my book and read it. The next day he said, you should be doing this for the public. Through a huge push I ended up doing *Hiding the*

Elephant (2003), which is about the technology and personality that produces stage magic. A number of these personalities ended up marching through *Hiding the Elephant*, including Thurston, Maskelyne and Kellar. Before that, I had written about Chung Ling Soo, who was an American magician impersonating a Chinese magician. He died trying to catch a bullet in his teeth. It was a real experience for me to translate this world for the pubic. Some of it was not hard – a good story is a good story – but some of it was really hard, because how do you tell the public about the technical aspects of a stage illusion?

FT: In *Art & Artifice*, you write about Pepper's Ghost and the Mascot Moth, both virtuoso illusions. No one remembers them. Yet everyone knows about Sawing the Woman in Half, which was a clumsy and unremarkable trick. Why is that?

JS: PT Selbit accidentally happened upon this illusion. I used the analogy of sidling up to an old horse and putting on a saddle and it becomes a bucking bronco and you don't know how to hold on. That's what happened with Sawing the Woman in Half in the late 1920s. It had a lot to do with what was happening in society. What you're seeing is a woman-as-victim scenario, like being tied to the railroad tracks. It had to do with women's changing roles and the suffragette movement. There was also the popular fashion of Grand Guignol, where acts of terror were depicted onstage. So I think Selbit himself– a really solid, experienced showman – didn't quite understand what it was about this trick that made it suddenly take off. He had enough sense to know it was a fad. Now he had to find the next fad. So he came up with Bayonets Subduing a Woman, Crushing a Woman, Destroying a Girl. Nothing had the impact of Sawing the Woman in Half. So these societal issues below the surface get put on the stage. Great illusions are windows onto popular culture. Houdini was this little five-foot-two American who told Europe, "Go ahead, stop me." He said: "I'll show you who I am." That's exactly what America was to Europeans. Magicians looked back on the history of Sawing the Woman in Half and found that it went back for many years. It was first written about by Robert-Houdin in the 19th century – an old idea that resurfaced at the right time.



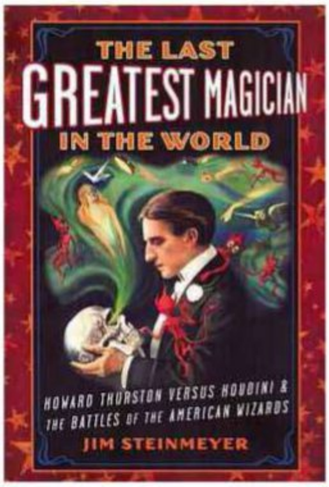
ABOVE: Thurston's Levitation of Princess Karnac; Mohammed and Abdul chant. **BELOW**: Thurston's illusion act featured costumes inspired by Oriental fairy tales.

MIKE CAVENEY EGYPTIAN HALL COLLECTION

MIKE CAVENEY EGYPTIAN HALL COLLECTION

FT: Magicians like Thurston used all manner of mesmeric devices in their shows. Hypnotising the lady to float, exercising Svengalian influence over assistants, pointing and snapping the fingers to make something happen. Yet magicians generally look down on hypnotism. So why did they use it?

JS: One of the great things about magic is that it's timeless. The things Thurston did would fool us today. The curse of that is that timelessness isn't topical. If you made someone float in the 1600s or 1700s, what do you do to make it seem relevant today? One thing they did was grab onto any kind of association that was topical, like mesmerism and spiritualism. The hypnotic gesture, where the Floating Princess falls backwards as if in a trance and levitates, makes no sense. But it was topical. Mesmerism and spiritualism were what magicians campaigned against during the day and then went back to the theatres in the evening and did things that evoked it. Maskelyne was a very strong anti-spiritualist and testified in court against spiritualists, yet he did performances that were wrapped in spiritualist lore. He used all the lingo, images, phrases. Thurston had a very complicated relationship with the supernatural. He investigated spiritualist mediums and believed something was there. Part of that was Eusapio Paladino, the Sicilian mystic. He was fooled very badly by her. It was the reason for his rift with Houdini.


THE LAST
GREATEST MAGICIAN
IN THE WORLD
HOWARD THURSTON VERSUS HOUDINI & THE BATTLES OF THE AMERICAN WIZARDS
JIM STEINMEYER

FT: You have said that a good magic show has to be experienced in person, yet today few people go out to see live shows. They stay home and look at a screen. Does that indicate a decline of mystery and fascination?

JS: Right now, magic is in a fallow period. The same could be said of opera or ballet. It's not the same when you see it on TV, but it reminds people it's something to go and see in person. The trick is to disseminate an awareness of it. Magic will always endure because it's in the shadows. You'll never be able to kill it. Whenever you get 20 people together and it's a miracle for them – bang, it's back.

FT: What is it that makes someone want to be a magician?

JS: Some people are drawn to it for the wrong reasons. It's easier than being a comedian, because you can go out and buy stuff that will work almost right away. But there's also the performer who sees a level of transformative experience for an audience. It's a little like the circus. Everybody says they like the circus but many people don't go because they think it's dirty, the animals are mistreated, there's sawdust on the ground. But if you really go and see a great circus you leave thoroughly happy. It's an experience that always surprises people. Same with a magic show. It's entertainment everybody knows about but doesn't frequent. Every so often you have a chance to see it and you realise how fascinating it is. Thurston talked about what it's like being onstage, when you know it's exactly right. He said it's something like crashing waves of reaction – he could feel the reaction and control it. It's that feeling that's ultimately the reason.

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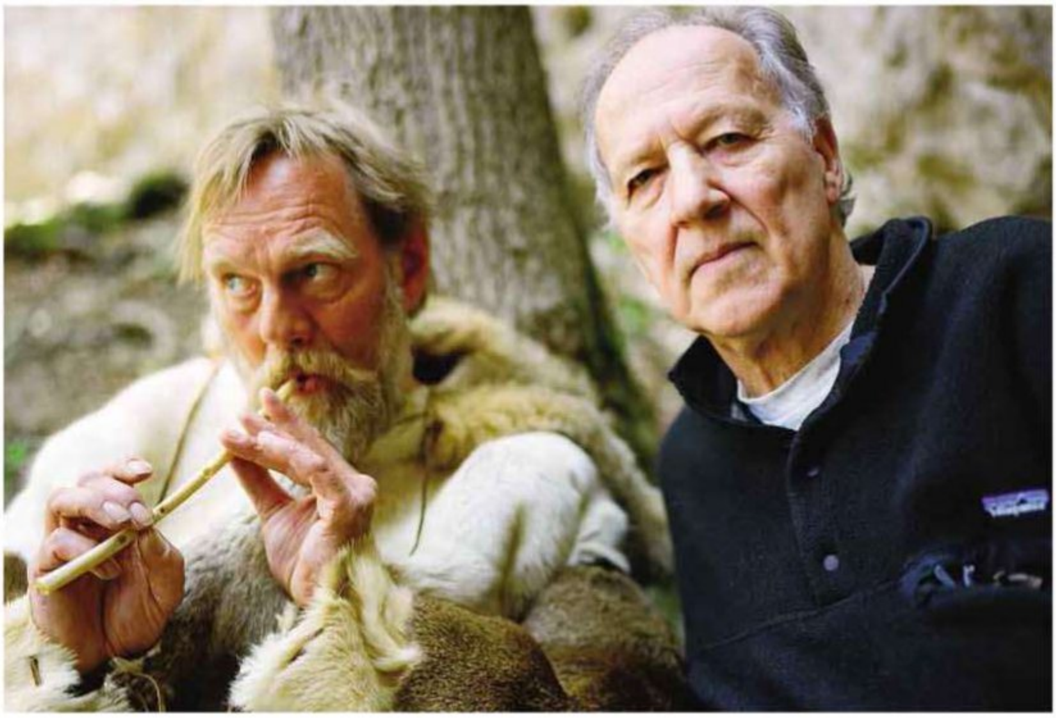

Cave of Forgotten Dreams

Dir Werner Herzog, France/Canada/US/UK/Germany 2010
UK release 25 March

Buried deep beneath the wild landscape of the Ardèche, the magnificent Chauvet Cave contains the world's oldest known rock art. Over 30,000 years ago, Palæolithic artists covered its walls with pictures of the animals that roamed the hills outside – horses, lions, rhinos. Then the entrance collapsed, preserving them for millennia, while in the silence crystals grew, bones fossilised and calcite sealed over a cave bear's skull. The cave wasn't re-discovered until 1994, and since then, in order to minimise damage, only a tiny number of scientists have been allowed inside, for just a couple of weeks every year. And then Werner Herzog wrangled himself access.

In *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* Herzog sets out, despite all the obstacles to filming, to show what it's like to be inside Chauvet Cave, to be where none of the rest of us will ever be. His is not a TV documentary-style overview with a neat explanation, talking heads and re-enactments starring men in loincloths; rather, with mesmerising shots of the cave's strange and glittering interior and of its extraordinary paintings, Herzog conveys some of the place's awesome power. The mystery of these long-vanished artists remains, and yet small details link them to us and bring them to life: ochre handprints daubed over the walls by a man with a crooked little finger, scorch marks on the rock ceiling, charcoal that fell from a torch and has lain undisturbed ever since.

The film's loose structure, rambling in and out of the cave and between interviews, is similar to that Herzog employed in his study of men at the Antarctic, *Encounters at the End of the World*. He gives the impression that he has stumbled upon his cast of characters, the oddballs and misfits drawn to extreme, awe-inspiring environments, and simply set up his camera and let them talk, giving them the space to reveal their eccentricities. So, a master perfumer clambers over the region's rocks, sniffing for the air currents that will reveal another forgotten cave; an experimental archæologist plays 'The Star-Spangled Banner' on a reconstructed prehistoric flute; a researcher speaks bashfully of a past career in the circus. When Herzog veers off-location for an academic aside, the cave's spell is briefly broken. This is not a film about sterile history, he is saying, but about individual lives linked by our shared human soul. The emotional connection is deepened by the dramatic soundtrack, which ranges between silence, primitive weirdness and opera.

But then there's the matter of the 3D, which in *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* is so brain-frying that it makes you close your eyes. Objects that are close to the camera, at the edge of shot or moving, mutate: bits of cave pop out when they should recede, and recede when they should pop out, while landscapes are series of flat layers stuck on top of each other. The only subject that the 3D works for is the drawings, when suddenly it all makes sense and you understand their sculptural qualities, the way the bulbous rocks' contours were used to animate the creatures, to give weight to a charging rhino or speed to galloping horses.

As with much of Herzog's recent work, the filmmaking process is itself a subject. Here, the disorientating 3D is deliberate, a sign of an artist working at the edge of his technical capabilities to realise a vision – and Herzog clearly loves these logistical challenges, the limited access time, the tiny crew, the path no one can step off, the simple lighting. Herzog's use of 3D reminds us how the Palæolithic artists drew using movement lines so that, it is speculated, in the flicker of firelight and with the help of drugs and ritual the animals came alive. This 3D world is not fixed and known but collapses between dimensions, just as in their more fluid, animist world the cave artists could change into animals. It does still give you a headache though.

The film ends at a nearby nuclear power plant, where water from the cooling towers is used to create tropical conditions for a crocodile farm. A mutant albino radioactive crocodile stares out at us with his bulbous eyes, and Herzog speculates that with the water's refractions and the tank's glass and the crocodile's alien species brain, it sees us as imperfectly, and with the same awe and wonder, as we see the people of Chauvet Cave. It's a typically eccentric flourish to a sometimes frustrating but hugely powerful film.

Jen Ogilvie

Fortean Times Verdict

HERZOG'S TAKE ON THE 3D FILM IS TYPICALLY ECCENTRIC **7**

Wake Wood

Dir David Keating, UK/Ireland/Sweden 2010
Momentum Pictures, £15.99; UK release from 25 March

In the last two years, the revitalised Hammer Films has released two new horror movies, including the acclaimed *Let Me In*, a very creditable remake of the Swedish *Let the Right One In*. This year sees another three titles scheduled for release, starting with *Wake Wood*, produced in conjunction with the Irish Film Board and the Swedish Film Institute.

After losing their daughter in a tragic dog attack, Patrick and Louise Daly (Aidan Gillen and Eva Brithistle) move to the quiet, if somewhat *Wicker Man*-esque, village of Wake Wood in rural Ireland. As they try to deal with their grief and settle into the tight-knit community, he working as a vet and she as a pharmacist, they discover that the villagers, led by country-squire-turned-shaman Arthur (Timothy Spall), are engaging in decidedly odd nocturnal rituals. It turns out that they have the power to bring the recently deceased back to life – on the understanding that they can't have been in the ground for more than a year and will only return for three precious days, during which time the grieving nearest and dearest must come to terms with their loss once and for all before saying goodbye.

Initially sceptical (well, you would be, wouldn't you?), Patrick and Louise decide to take up Arthur's offer; one problem is that the ritual requires a recently vacated body as the medium for Alice's rebirth. Luckily, the people of Wake Wood suffer accidental deaths with alarming regularity, so a corpse is always close at hand. In this case, an unfortunate accident involving a farmer and a very large bull saves the day.

Of course, problems ensue; the mourning parents have clearly neither read "The Monkey's Paw" nor been quite straight with Arthur about precisely how long their little girl has been dead. The ritual, very pleasing with all its fire and slime and chanting, seems successful enough, but the newly reborn Alice is… not quite right.

Wake Wood uses its low budget to good effect, while the Swedish tie-in provides the distinctively bleak feel that characterised *Let the Right One In*, adapted successfully to the rural Irish setting. David Keating directs well enough, using roaming unsteady-cams, and does not attempt any visual acrobatics that would stretch or betray the budget. Some may find Gillen's performance a bit weak, but Spall steals the show with his engrossing and faintly comic rural mysticism.

George Binning

Fortean Times Verdict

LOW BUDGET HORROR WITH A PLEASINGLY BLEAK RURAL FEEL 7

Vamp

Dir Richard Wenk, US 1986

Arrow Video, £17.99/£22.99

Many Eighties teen movies are revered with a deep affection; *Risky Business*, *Back to the Future* and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, for example. *Vamp*, which clearly draws on these (with the obvious tasty addition of vampires), rarely features on this list and when it threatens 'Welcome to your worst nightmare', it isn't far from the truth. This film really embodies the 'dark side' of the decade: a decade where Robert Palmer represents the height of louche sophistication, money buys anything, and vacuous women are happiest when having crumpled dollar bills thrown at their gyrations in a sleazy club. God forbid any of them try to exert their sexuality; they're just 'hos', or in this case, vampires.

Chris Makepeace is our unlikely and unlikeable hero, (think Michael J Fox, Matthew Broderick and Tom Cruise, stripped of any cheeky-chappy charm), trying to find strippers for his new frat-house (yes, it's that bad). He meets his match in Grace Jones, who (obviously), looks fan(g)tastic, all Kabuki-Bowie-Sphynx-stylee. The least erotic vampire tale ever told then proceeds to unfold as you keep one hand on the fast forward button in the vain hope that the film will at some point live up to its 18 certificate.

By the end I felt the lifeblood had slowly drained from me, giving the film a kind of ironic victory, if not necessarily the one intended.

Tim Weinberg

Fortean Times Verdict

TOOTHLESS 80s VAMPIRE ROMP STILL SUCKS 4

Altitude

Dir Kaare Andrews, US 2010

Anchor Bay Entertainment, £15.99/£19.99

Sometimes, just sometimes, killing American teenagers can be given a new slant and become fun again. Which is what Kaare Andrews has done here, utilising a minimal budget to create a sure-to-be-cult mini-masterpiece. You want to see repressed Emos, beery jock, feisty heroine and her stupider, sluttier friend all fighting and trying to get laid? Of course you do – and the twist is that it all takes place in a light aircraft that's hurtling out of control.

Fear of flying, claustrophobia, doomed American teens… they're all here in a film that for at least half its duration is uncomfortable viewing, before taking a wholly-unexpected U-turn into EC Comics/Twilight Zone/HP Lovecraft territory, with what's left of our crew having to fight a giant space-octopus (no spoiler here, as our Cthulhoid friend wriggles and writhes his tendrils menacingly on the DVD cover).

Accomplished, exciting and reverential of its genre, while adding new twists, *Altitude* comes highly recommended.

Tim Weinberg

Fortean Times Verdict

TENTACLED TERROR AT 20,000 FEET! RECOMMENDED 8

SHORTS

THE LOST SKELETON OF CADAVRA

(4Digital Media, £15.99)

Apparently writer/director Larry Blamire's brief to his cast was to be "brilliant and terrible at the same time"; and, I think it's fair to say, they all triumphed. This labour of love and pæan to Ed Wood takes *Plan 9 from Outer Space* as its obvious starting point and doesn't depart far from it. But whereas bad pastiche often comes down to plain mockery (usually neither as clever or as funny as it thinks it is), this really is very good and great fun.

Where to start? With our protagonists, bacofoil-bedecked aliens Lattis and Kro-Bar? Or their nemesis, Animala, "part woman, part four different forest animals"? Or perhaps with the Lost Skeleton of the title who, when animated (using very visible strings, natch), is pant-wettingly funny? The acting is flat, the dialogue clunky and repetitive and it's all very clever and warmly affectionate, reminding me of Mel Brooks at his best (*Young Frankenstein*), or the late, lamented Leslie Nielson doing his wide-eyed, innocent/dumb schtick to perfection. There's a promised sequel, *Trail of the Screaming Forehead*, to come, and this reviewer, for one, can't wait. **Tim Weinberg 9/10**

DEEP RED

(Arrow Video, £17.99/£22.99)

Dario Argento's masterpiece gets a Blu-Ray makeover and emerges resplendent and – at last – completely uncut (yes, even the lizard impaled on a pin is here following a statement that this was a visual effect and no lizards were actually hurt in the making of this movie). If you're unfamilair with what is arguably Argento's best film, it's essentially a classic Italian *giallo* (complete with black-gloved killer) but elevated to dizzyingly perverse Freudian heights by the director's masterly treatment, with its constantly prowling camera and thumping Goblin soundtrack continually ratcheting up the tension. This two-disc set contains both the superior and longer director's cut and the international theatrical version, both in HD, plus commentaries and extras. **David Sutton 9/10**

BEDEVILLED

(Optimum Home Entertainment, £15.99/£19.99)

This South Korean take on the rather different moral horrors thrown up by urban and rural life sees glacially pretty and heartless bank worker Hae-Won returning for a holiday to the sparsely populated island of Moodoo where she once spent happy childhood holidays at her grandfather's house. She reconnects with her old friend Bok-Nam, the country girl who never left for the mainland and is now the victim of relentless physical, sexual and psychological abuse from the islanders, possibly the most convincingly portrayed family of ghastly peasants ever committed to celluloid; they may be little better than appetitive animals, but the supposedly more sophisticated Hae-Won chooses not to intervene on her increasingly desperate friend's behalf; and when Bok-Nam finally cracks, an orgy of bloodletting ensues. *Bedevilled* is nearly a very good film, with compelling performances, a strong sense of place and moments of real power. Had it ended 15 minutes before it actually does, and thus avoided a perfunctory, unnecessary and oddly sentimental conclusion, it would have been an impressive piece of work; but they botched it. **DS 6/10**

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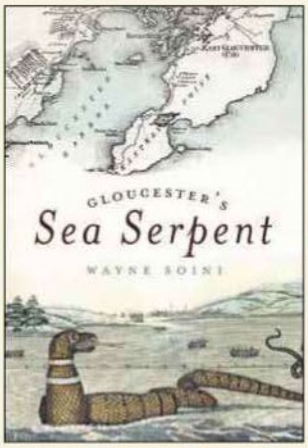

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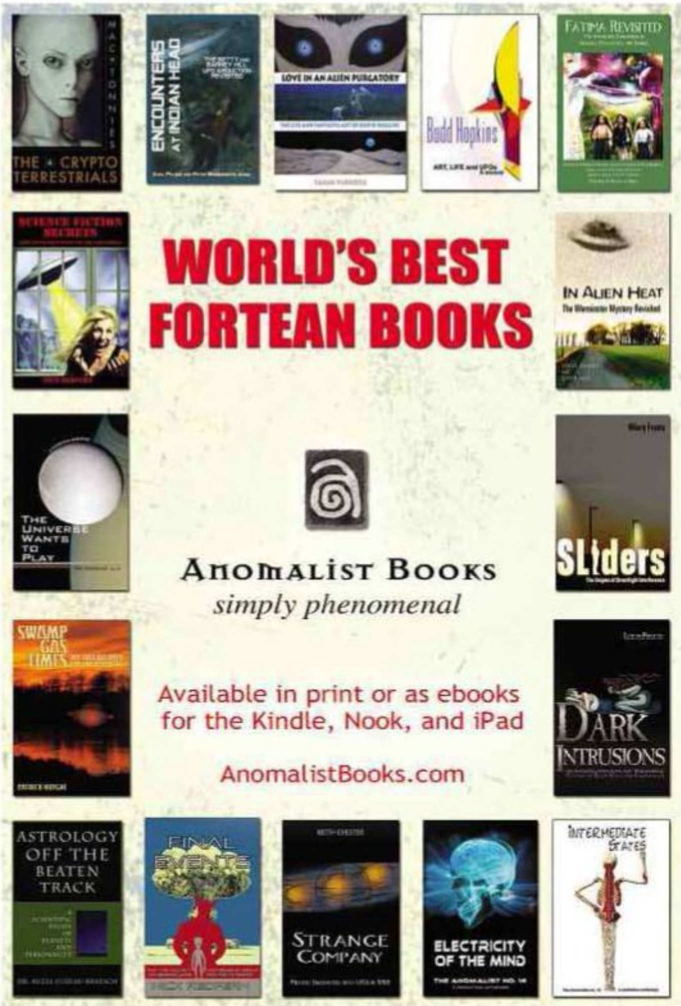

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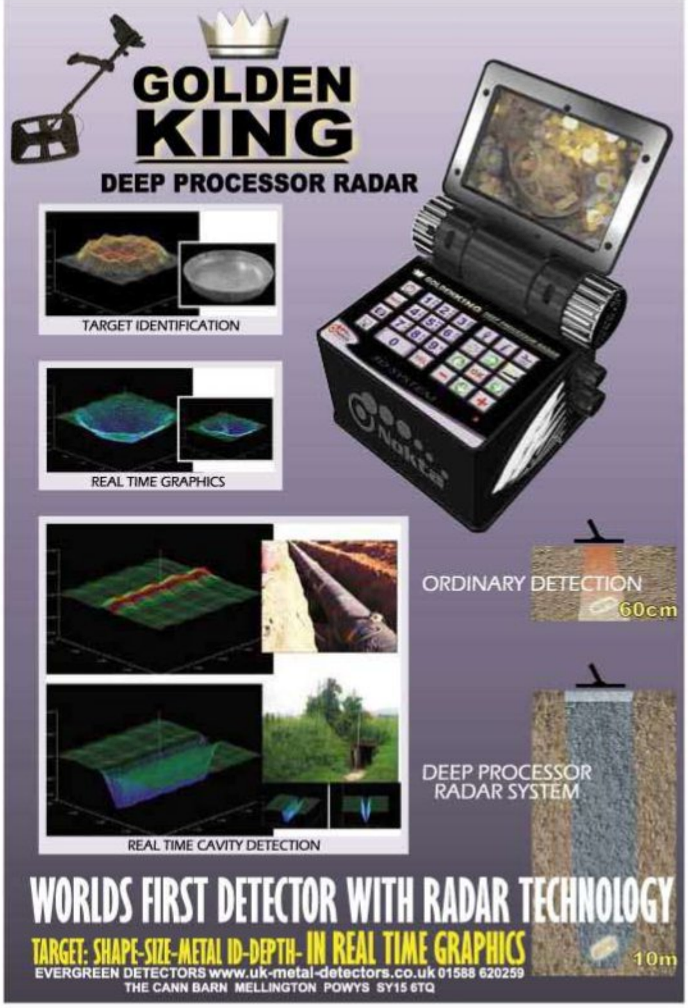

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Dear FT...

letters

Early Quakers

A friend has drawn my attention to "Naked Quakers" by Justin Meggitt [**FT271:38–42**], probably because I am one of the authors referenced in the notes. I enjoyed the article, which brings out the peculiarities of early Quakers very well. However, there are a few matters that need attention:

1 Early Quakers were by no means all pacifist. Many had been in the Army, and some served in the militias raised in 1659.
2 It was William Simpson, not Solomon Eccles, who made a habit of "walking naked as a sign".
3 James Nayler rode a horse, not a donkey, into Bristol, as the picture you published shows.
4 It is indeed probable that John Luffe starved to death, but probably by fasting too much rather than by the deliberate act of his captors.
5 Would the author please give his source for the statement that a number of Quaker prophets were executed, both English and Native American? The reference given, to George Bishop's *New England Judged*, deals only with the persecution in New England which resulted in four Quakers being hanged, but that is hardly a 'number', and they were not native Americans.

Rosemary Moore
By email

Justin J Meggitt responds:
I am glad that Rosemary, an eminent scholar of Quakerism, liked the piece.

1 *I am aware that not all early Quakers were pacifist and some were in militias and the Navy in the 1650s. However, most were, and they would corporately commit to this position in 1660 in their famous "Declaration from the Harmless & Innocent People of God called Quakers" addressed to Charles II.*

2 *Yes, William Simpson was particularly famous for going naked as a sign. However, Solomon Eccles did it too – and it was him in the Pepys's incident that began the article. And so did many other Quakers, men and women.*

3 *Glad to stand corrected about Nayler's horse rather than ass.*

4 *Rosemary is quite right that it is possible Luffe may have starved to death as a result of his own fasting. Early Quakers had to refute this accusation (Henry Cadbury (ed.):* Narrative Papers of George Fox, *Friends United Press, Richmond, 1972, p.20). There is a dispute about whether Luffe died as a result of his own actions or those of his captors. We'll never know for sure.*

5 *As for the Quaker Native American prophets who were put to death, the reference can be found in an epistle of George Fox found in Henry Cadbury, op. cit., p.140: "And the power of the Lord is entered among the Indians, and one of them was moved to go abroad in the power to minister, and they did hang him; and since four of five of them is moved to go forth and we heard as if they have hanged them."*

Our mute friends

David Hambling's article suggesting humans and dogs had trained each other [**FT269:14**] struck a chord with me. A few weeks ago, I was staying the weekend with friends who have a lovely Jack Russell called Jake. From the start, when out for a cigarette, I would throw things for him to find and return. Great stuff! I have cats and they're very different. On Saturday morning, his favourite item to play with was a very big apple. Later in the day he brought this much-abused fruit to me for more fun. I said in a normal conversational voice: "Oh, Jake, I'm not throwing that manky apple for you. If you want to play, take it away and bring a ball or something." Then turned back to my friend for a more general conversation.

Jake thought about it for about 10 seconds, took the apple away and came back with a ball, much to the amazement of both my friend and myself. I was then committed to another 15 minutes in the cold. I do not 'know' dogs very well, I've never lived with one. I like them but I can't really have one due to work commitments. Maybe Jake is exceptional, maybe dogs are really quite attuned, or maybe humans are. He trained me very well and we were both happy to compromise.

Jaki Flowers
Bolton, Lancashire

I query David Hambling's assertion that humans domesticated dogs about 10,000 (or however many) years ago. Under current arrangements, dogs receive guaranteed food, water, shelter, warmth, medical services and protection. In return, they are required to provide a rather limited range of services, and in the case of domestic pets none at all. So, from a fortean perspective, should we not ask: who domesticated whom?

Martin Jenkins
London

True stories?

I've really enjoyed Matt Salusbury's reminiscences of the Strange Stories section of *World Of Wonder* magazine. I don't recall reading the magazine myself – I was a bit too young and more of a *Beano* man – but I certainly recognised one of the "strange stories". This concerned "the disappearance – along with all records of her having been there – of a Mrs Randolph from… the Carillon Hotel during the 1899 Paris Exhibition", explained as the authorities hushing up her death from the plague [**FT272:51**]. I didn't read this in *World Of Wonder* but as a short work of fiction called "The Room On The Fourth Floor" by Ralph Strauss, which I found in a 1934 anthology called *The Evening Standard Book Of Short Stories*. The tale – and its explanation – are identical, except that "Mrs Randolph" becomes Mrs Farringham and the name of the hotel is not given. Did the short story emerge from an actual event or a myth or did the myth emerge from the short story? The transcript of the story can be found here: http://bit.ly/fCpIoG (gutenberg.net.au).

Albert Ravey
Ramsey, Isle of Man

Matt Salusbury refers to the story of the *USS Arakine* and its "battle of the cheeses" [**FT271:48**]. I ran into the same story, though told about a ship called the *USS Arakwe*, in CB Colby's *Strangely Enough* (abridged edition by Scholastic Book Service, New York, 1963, pp.15–17; originally copyright 1959), a book targeted at primary school children in its abridged form. I have no idea if the story of the cheeses is itself true, but I suspect the factual origin for the story was the destruction of the *USS Wateree*, a sidewheel gunboat built in 1863–64 and destroyed by a tsunami on 13 August 1868 at Arica, which was then in Peru but is now part of Chile. The common elements between the *Arakwe* story and the *Wateree* include the ship being described as a sidewheel gunboat, its presence off the Chilean coast, the tsunami, it being driven inland, and, naturally, being subsequently decommissioned.

Brian Bixby
By email

The account given in Colby's *Strangely Enough* states that the *USS Arakwe* was patrolling the Chilean coast to show American support for the Chilean government and was on the verge of returning to the US for repairs when she got carried inland by a tsunami. After the cheeses incident, she eventually got broken up where she lay, but was listed in the annals (whatever annals they were!) as "lost in action".

Gary Stocker
Leamington Spa, Warwickshire

Editor's note: *Peter Ball tells us that there is no mention of the USS Arakine or the USS Arakwe in Conway's* All the World's Fighting Ships 1860–1905.

the UFO files
FLYINGSAUCERY

UFOs and weapon sites

In "Alien Missile Meddlers" [**FT270:30**], Dr David Clarke pooh-poohed information confirming UFO activity at nuclear weapons sites – including that presented by former US Air Force personnel at my 27 September 2010 press conference in Washington DC. Some of Clarke's comments follow, interspersed with my responses. While Clark accuses me of being the "real source of this ripping yarn", anyone who views the video of the press conference (www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jUU4Z8QdHI) will find seven former US Air Force officers speaking of their own accord, with no assistance from me. Their reports of UFO activity at nuclear weapons sites are only the tip of the iceberg. I have interviewed more than 120 such persons, who describe ongoing UFO incidents at missile sites, weapons depots, or test sites. That testimony may be found in my book *UFOs and Nukes*.

Clarke dismisses the "idea that aliens are coming here to warn us about our nuclear experiments" as "a favourite theme of contactees such as George King during the 1950s", but fails to mention that during the same era, behind the scenes, the US military was dealing with the very real problem of UFO incursions at nuke-related sites, as declassified documents confirm. A small cross-section of these can be found at: http://bit.ly/av8odD (theufochronicles.com).

Clarke also attempts to make "Col Charles Halt of Rendlesham forest fame" sound like anything but a credible witness, complaining that "Halt's account has grown over the years from a sighting of 'unexplained lights' in a Suffolk forest into what these days resembles a script for a science fiction film", and that his claims "are skewered by the fact that Halt's boss, Bentwaters base commander Col Ted Conrad, has told us he saw nothing unusual".

I have already addressed Clarke's inaccurate comments about Halt (see http://bit.ly/cgauIM (theufochronicles.com)). For example, when he attempted to discredit Halt last summer, he incorrectly stated that the colonel had only mentioned the 1980 incident at the Bentwaters nuclear weapons depot "20 or 30 years" later. Actually, Halt revealed it on an American television programme in 1991 – the year he retired from the Air Force and, therefore, the first real opportunity he had to discuss it publicly. Moreover, after Clarke published the 2010 letter he had received from Conrad, in which he says no UFOs were present at Bentwaters, Halt dared Conrad to show up at my press conference and publicly challenge his own testimony. Conrad didn't turn up.

Clarke also questions the testimony of Captain Robert Salas concerning the Malmstrom Air Force Base UFO incident, stating that "virtually every detail of Salas's story has been questioned by James Carlson, whose… father Eric, a Captain in the USAF, was present at the time."

Clarke describes Salas as my "other key 'credible witness'". Again, if one views the video of my press conference, one will find seven individuals discussing UFO activity at US nuclear weapons sites. Two of them, retired Lt Col Dwynne Arneson and former Capt Robert Jamison, provided testimony that supported Salas's assertions about UFO involvement in the simultaneous disruption of several nuclear missiles at Malmstrom AFB.

Regarding James Carlson's discredited claim about there being no UFO involvement in one of those incidents, on 16 March 1967, one can hear what actually happened from the lips of Carlson's father's deputy missile commander, now-retired Col Walter Figel, by listening to the recorded conversations Salas and I had with Figel years ago. Links to his taped confessions appear in my online article "The Echo/Oscar Witch Hunt".

Also appearing in the article is a pdf image of a 1997 letter written by Boeing Corporation engineer Robert Kaminski – the person in charge of investigating that particular missile shutdown – in which Kaminski says that no prosaic reason for the failures could be found. This letter is ignored by James Carlson in favour of an interim Air Force report (Clarke's supposedly "hard evidence") which mused about the possibility of a computer failure being responsible for the malfunctions – something Kaminski quickly ruled out once his investigation took place. Kaminski also wrote that he had received reports from other Boeing personnel on-scene about UFO activity at the time of the incident.

Robert Hastings
By email

Pennine sightings

Regarding Dr Peter McCue's letter about UFO sightings in the Pennines [**FT272:75**]: I cannot comment on the context of my quote about 'thousands' of sightings within the Pennines from an American publication, as I have never seen the book in question. However, I certainly stand by the figures that he quotes from my own book, *Supernatural Pennines*, as I went to some trouble combining sources and calculating reports of UFOs within the area in order to establish a good guide to the number of cases.

Dr McCue suggests a major discrepancy between my finding of around 129 cases I note as unexplained within the Pennine window out of some 1,076 sightings in total from here and the reference to 'thousands' of UAP reports in the heart of this region as used by Messrs Brookesmith, Clarke and Roberts in their *FT* article.

While I had no involvement in the *FT* article, from my experience in studying this area for several decades I do not find their comment to be surprising. My figures in *Supernatural Pennines* were based on well-documented sources and covered a specific period of 53 years up to 2000. They also stem entirely from investigated cases reported to local UFO researchers in the area. You can reasonably extrapolate from here to gauge the total number of UAP reports likely in this area – taking into account several factors.

Firstly, that research shows that a considerable majority of UFO sightings are not reported to UFO groups (surveys have suggested this to be as high as 90 per cent, due to lack of familiarity with how to do so and common witness reluctance to go public with a sighting). Secondly, that UAP phenomena are not only likely to be reported in a UFO context. So we need to bear in mind a fair proportion of other fortean phenomena where figures are less readily available – such as ball lightning and certain types of apparition. Thirdly, the area in question has historical evidence suggesting that strange phenomena of the kind being reported today have been recorded far into the past.

The cumulative result of these further sources of data means that while I may have logged just over 1,000 sightings made in a UFO context for the broader Pennine area across part of the 20th century, the true figure we need to consider more broadly is undefined but quite reasonably described as 'thousands'. While this indeed covers a wider area, my figures have shown how statistically prominent is the zone being described as 'UFO Alley' (just under 10 per cent of all sightings in the Bacup/Todmorden area and similar high levels in surrounding 'hot spots')

Jenny Randles
By email

Google Earth
The Surreal McCoy

False alarm

Your piece on Harold Camping [**FT269:11**] and his prophecy that the world will end in May 2011 fails to mention that in the early 1990s Camping claimed that Jesus would return in September 1994. Does anyone remember how that turned out?

R Regan
By email

Damned things

Re invisible monsters ["Blasts from the Past", **FT269:30–31**]: according to Paul Fatout's biography *Ambrose Bierce: the Devil's Lexicographer*, the famous tale "The Damned Thing" was based on an actual occurrence: "Another story pertinent to character was 'The Damned Thing', published in the 1893 Christmas number of the New York *Town Topics*. Similar to Maupassant's 'Le Horla', the tale is of a spectral presence, sensed but unseen: an emptiness that moves and terrifies. It was suggested, the author said, 'by a rather disquieting personal experience while gunning':

"'I am convinced that in daylight and on an open road I stood in the immediate presence of a wild beast invisible to me but sufficiently conspicuous to my dog, and sufficiently formidable to frighten it exceedingly.'"[1]

Texas hosts another invisible monster, according to Lone Star historian William Edward Syers. The Ottine Swamp flanks the San Marcos River southeast of Austin and encompasses Palmetto State Park. About 1980, Syers interviewed Berthold Jackson, a Texas A&M graduate and woodsman, one of many hunters and fisherman who have encountered the "thing" in the swamp. "He had never read Ambrose Bierce's masterpiece, 'The Damned Thing'... Yet that is precisely what he described to me over early coffee on a fine spring morning." One night, Jackson was hunting with a friend, Johnny Boehm of Gonzales, Texas:

"'Johnny was behind me, maybe fifty yards. I could see his light, and he could see mine. The damned thing got right between us. We could see the brush move.' He gestured the rippling movement of passage. 'We could hear brush snap underfoot. But we couldn't see a thing except that brush moving. Not the thing itself. And that close, an animal's eyes would show like headlights.'

"'You've never actually seen it?' I asked.

"'Just its movement. And I've put a big light on it; so have others, more than once. Nothing!'"

Jackson named several others who had encountered the thing, from Luling and Gonzales. Two men, Billy Webb and Ab Ussery, running a trotline one night, saw an expanse of bloodweeds along the riverbank move as if something large were passing through it, following them. They shone a large light at the disturbance from only 20ft (6m) away but still saw nothing.

The "Thing" seems to be attracted to vehicles parked on Lookout Hill, which lies near the entrance of Palmetto State Park. Two young men, Brewster Short and Wayne Hodges, readying themselves to go home from a hunting trip, claimed that something unseen reared up on the back of their car. They fled hastily, leaving their dogs behind. This experience so disturbed Wayne that he moved into his parents' bedroom. Lamar Ryan, Jackson's cousin, was parked one night on the hill with his fiancée when something started shoving his pickup towards the edge of a steep drop-off. Lamar jumped out, but he could see nothing, despite the moonlight. He and his wife-to-be left hastily.

Jackson's son spoke to a couple who lived in a trailer house near the swamp. He was informed that something had once or twice shaken the trailer "like a box", and that the couple had come home one day to find the wife's best dress, which had been on a clothesline, "torn in half, and each half rolled in a ball and stuck under each bed".[2]

Jody Noller of Connecticut provided a similar "invisible thing" report for Joanne Austin's *Weird Hauntings*. The year is unspecified, but the event occurred at a YMCA camp near Washington, New Hampshire, when the witness was 14. One night at about 2:00am, Noller woke to "heavy footsteps" in the leaves. "I heard brush being swept aside and a kind of low-pitched wailing I couldn't identify," he reports. He claims to have been familiar with most animal noises (and teenage camper noises, for that matter). Noller woke his tentmate Bruce, and both looked out with large flashlights. "The leaves and branches were being pulled off trees and thrown around, as if something very large and invisible was deliberately destroying the trees."

The boys naturally yelled for help, but the camp counsellors who responded were equally mystified. One counsellor, Jim, left and returned with a shotgun. As the other counsellor held a light, he fired into "it" twice from 20ft (6m) away. "It" didn't seem to be harmed, but now "small-to-medium-sized rocks" came flying out of the trees. One hit Noller painfully in the head. The thing moved noisily into the deep woods, wailing again.

By now, all the young campers were awake and screaming. The counsellors called the state police, who found nothing but torn saplings and underbrush. From then on, several counsellors sat up at night with shotguns, but the "Camp Morgan Thing" never returned.[3]

Another story of a huge invisible entity was posted at alt.folklore.ghost-stories:

"They had both heard something very large and heavy enough to shake the ground with its footsteps come up from a nearby ravine and walk around their house, trying to get in."

There is a running thread in these stories of something massive and powerful, close by yet as clear as air, a solid and destructive "emptiness" – an incongruity Fort would have liked.

NOTES

1 Paul Fatout: *Ambrose Bierce, the Devil's Lexicographer*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, 1951, pp.202–203. The quote within the quote comes from the *San Francisco Examiner*, 27 May 1894.

2 Ed Syers: *Ghost Stories of Texas*, Texian Press, Waco, Texas, 1981, pp.22–25.

3 Joanne Austin: *Weird Hauntings: True Tales of Ghostly Places*, Sterling Publishing, New York, 2006, pp.141–142.

Michael D Winkle
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Reports of strange invisible attackers of course predate 19th-century American newspapers and mystery writers. Jean Froissart reports the following in the first volume of his *Chronicles of the Hundred Years War*:

"A very strange thing happened at about the same time to an English squire belonging to the troop of Sir Peter Audley and Albrecht. They had gone raiding one day to a village called Ronay and began plundering it just as the priest was chanting high mass. This squire entered the church and went up to the altar and, seizing the chalice in which the priest was about to consecrate the blood of Our Lord, he spilt the wine on the ground. When the priest protested, he gave him a backhand blow with his gauntlet, so hard that the blood spurted onto the altar. After this, they all left the village and, while they were riding across the country, with the robber who had committed the outrage carrying the chalice, the plate and the communion cloth against his breast, this thing suddenly happened which I will relate; it was a true example of God's anger and vengeance and a warning to all other pillagers. His horse and he on it began whirling madly about in the fields and raising such an outcry that none dared to go near them; until at last they fell in a heap with their necks broken and were immediately turned to dust and ashes." (Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, ed. and trans. by Geoffrey Brereton (Penguin, 1978), p.162.

One might see this as a piece of religious fiction illustrating the punishment of despoilers; indeed, Froissart adds that interpretation to it. However, Froissart was not a misty-eyed religious propagandist and Jean Le Bel (on whose earlier work Froissart had leaned for much of volume one) was even less so. It is at least as likely that Froissart is reporting a real event – quite possibly more prosaic – which had left the anonymous squire's companions so troubled and disturbed that they remembered it over a decade later. Either way, this story cannot have been inspired by Ambrose Bierce.

Tom Hodgson-Jones
By email

it happened to me...

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Shadow coincidence

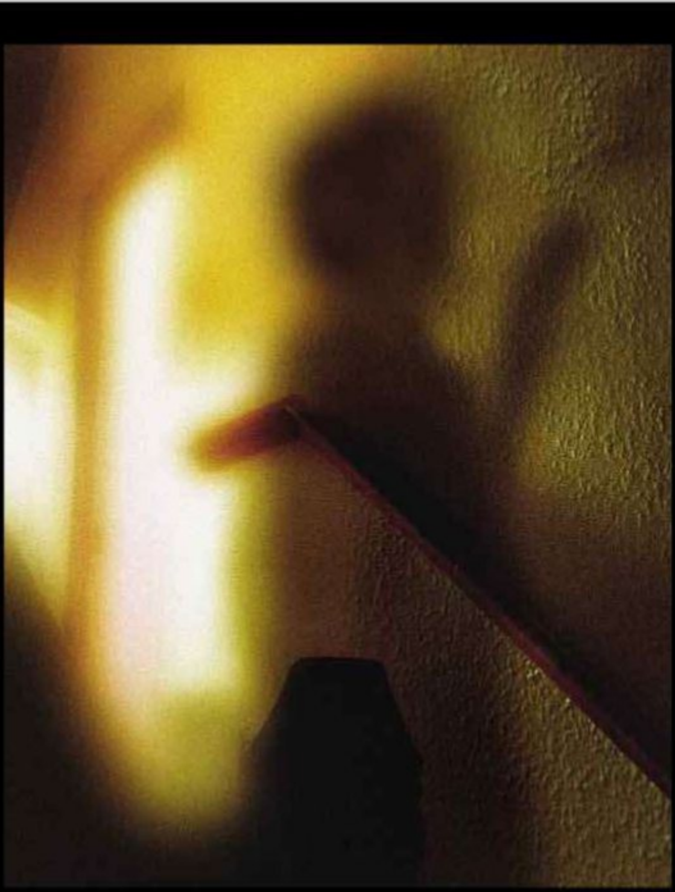
In May 1995, I was living with close friends in a self-contained flat at the top of their detached house. I had a bed-sitting room facing onto the road with a thin curtain over the window – so the room was very clearly lit by street-lights even with the lights off.

One night, I was lying on my back in bed, just beginning to drift off to sleep, when I saw what I can only describe as a very dark shadow or a silhouette of a figure wandering around the other end of the room. I could only think that it was one of my friends in the room. As it was midnight on a weekday and they were in bed, I dismissed this thought immediately and felt rather disturbed. As I opened my mouth to say something or scream, it was as though the figure had noticed I had seen it. The shadow immediately seemed to disintegrate.

I remember thinking it was very much like a CGI effect in a movie; the dissolving pieces became a whirlwind and flew towards the closed bedroom door. As they disappeared through the door, I heard the door slam – which was also impossible as a fire exit-type safety hinge was fixed to it, so it couldn't possibly have slammed shut even if it were open. I was immediately wide awake and lay there for about 20 minutes with my heart thudding. Finally, I managed to drift off to sleep.

The next day, after work, I told my friends about the incident. I was careful not to mention it in front of their son, who was about three at the time, because I was concerned he might get scared. We were in the garden, and later on the boy was calling for his mother from his bedroom window. She went up and came back shortly looking surprised. The boy had told his mum he had called her because he'd seen a 'shadow' moving at the end of his room, on the floor below my flat. This had never occurred before and to my knowledge it hasn't happened since, so the coincidence of us both apparently seeing the same thing has always puzzled me.

Charlotte E Smith
Earley, Berkshire



ETIENNE GILFILLAN

Shadow dancer

I was staying at my friend Tom's place in Brighton, part of an old Georgian building that had once been a hotel. The apartment was on the ground floor in what used to be the dining area. My friend's landlady was away and so we decided to take over her massive double bed, which certainly beat the crappy sofa I was sleeping on and Tom's mattress on the floor. He had previously joked that the apartment was haunted, but I just put this down to his overactive imagination.

So, off to bed we went – the super-duper-deluxe-high-level-comfort bed. Later that night, I was awakened by Tom shaking me. Before he even said anything, I noticed how incredibly cold the room had become and that I was covered in goose bumps. Tom then said: "It's here – the ghost!" I looked to the corner of the room, now illuminated by moonlight except for a blacker-than-black three-dimensional 'shadow' of what appeared to be a young girl dancing. I remember thinking how amazing this was at the time and, surprisingly, I felt little fear. "Am I really seeing what I think I'm seeing?" I asked, and Tom replied, "Yeah, it looks like it's dancing."

> "We stared, totally absorbed by the shadow-like quality of the entity"

We both stared at the thing for what must have been at least a minute, totally absorbed by the strange, black, shadow-like quality of the entity. Then it started to move towards the bed, at which point I began to panic. "I don't think I can stay in here tonight," I declared, before running out of the room, closely followed by Tom.

We decided to spend the rest of the weekend back in his room. Even this didn't entirely help; while we didn't see the entity again, there were various further incidents such as objects like ashtrays suddenly dropping off shelves and occasional strange giggling noises.

Christopher Davies
Stockholm, Sweden

The shadow people

Until the age of 10, I was brought up in a maisonette block in Southampton. I lived there with my mum, an older brother and a younger brother, and later a stepfather. I used to see 'shadows' quite often, especially walking up and down the stairs. I remember them being human-shaped, but like silhouettes and semi-transparent, and with very round heads. I asked my older brother a few years ago if he had ever seen anything there, and he described the figures to me perfectly.

There were at least two other odd events connected to this place. Every night in bed, I would hear a certain noise and got so used to it I'd wait to hear it before I dropped off to sleep. It was the sound of three 'grandfather' marbles (the really, really big ones) dropping one by one and making a sound as if they were rolling across a wooden floor.

I was reminiscing with my mother in 1993, when I was 19, and told her about those noises. She was gobsmacked. She said that when I was very young, before my younger brother was born in 1978 (so I would have been three or four and my older brother four or five) the old lady who lived below us came up one day and angrily accused her of letting us play with marbles very late at night. My mother assured her that it wasn't us, and as the family above us had children, set off to ask them. They claimed they had not heard the noise and it certainly wasn't their children.

The other incident concerned my younger brother, who was about three at the time. One night, he woke my mother with the utmost urgency. He claimed he had seen a man and some pigs walk into the bathroom! Well, the maisonette was built on old farmland, and the dairy next door still existed and was in use.

Amanda-Jayne Sherwood
By email

simulacra corner

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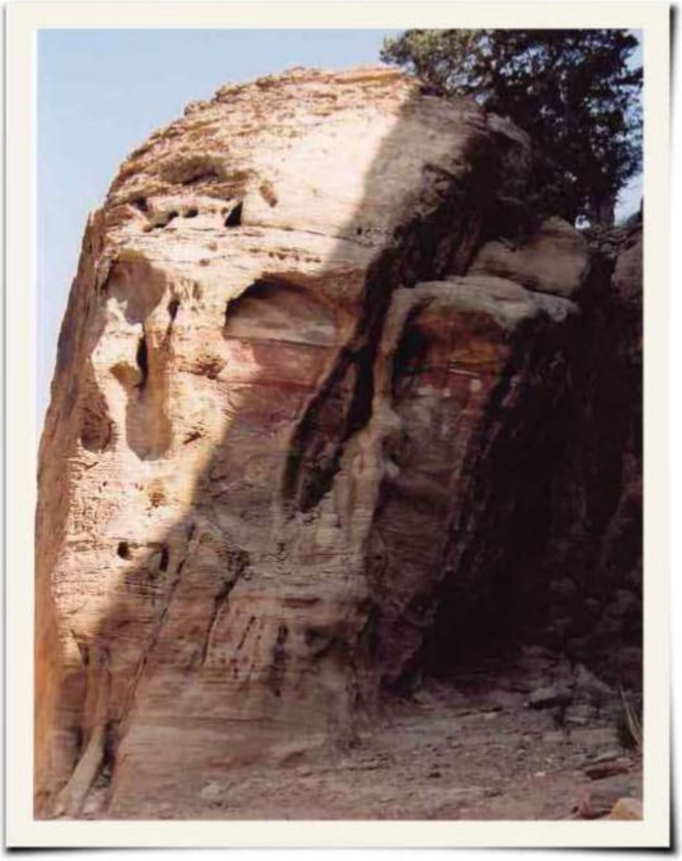
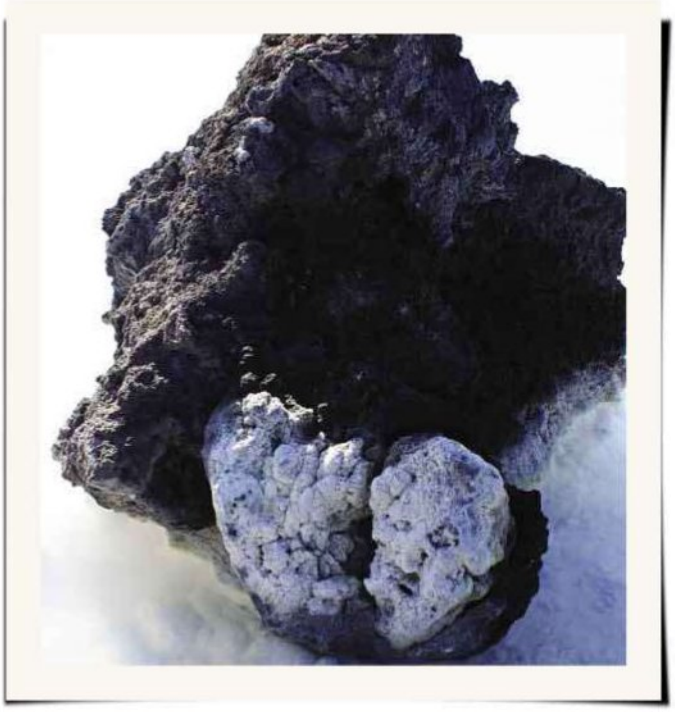
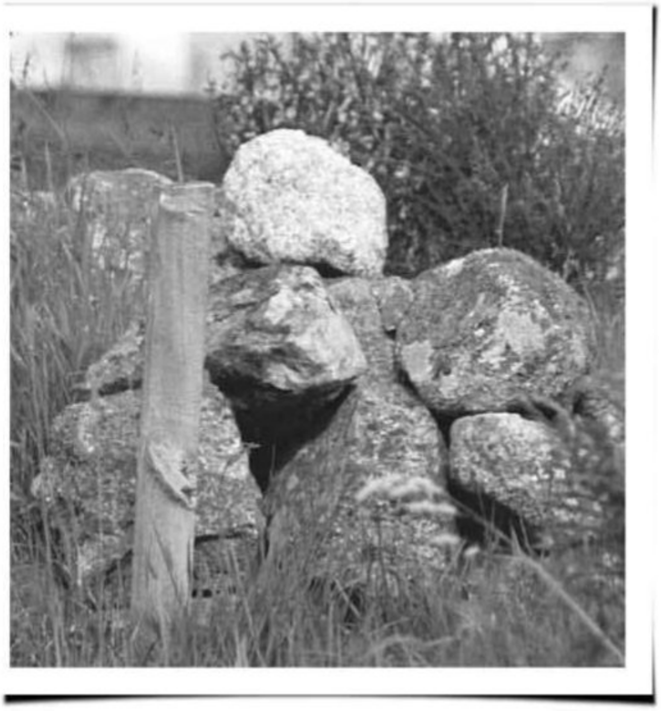
A selection of stone faces sent in by FT's observant readers.



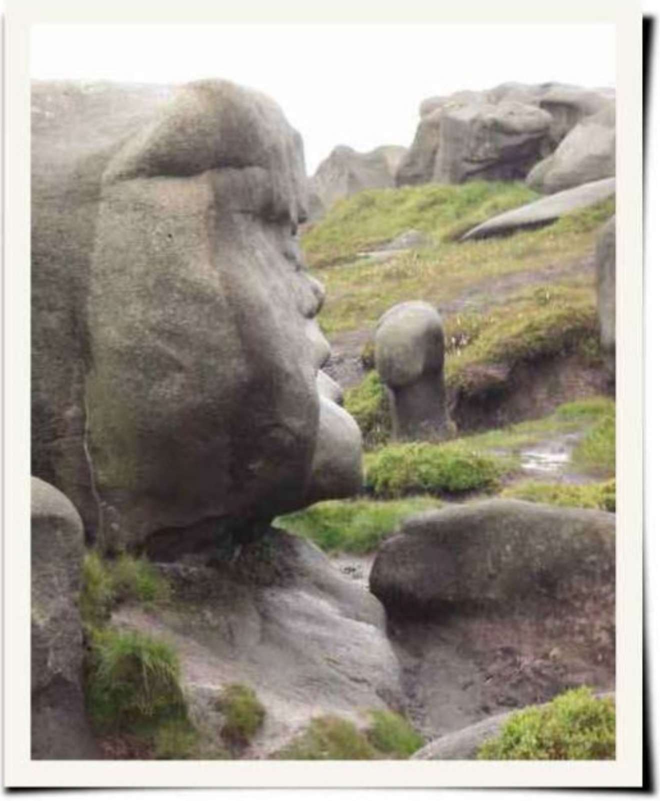
Peter Pereira saw this rock formation resembling a skull in the ancient Nabatæan city of Petra in Jordan.



Rosie Libatter and her husband were strolling around a deserted lava field next to The Blue Lagoon about 30km (19 miles) from Reykjavik in Iceland when they noticed this visage in the rock at lower right.



A stone gurner, part of a fallen-down dry stone wall in Stratherrick, Inverness-shire, photographed by Roger Latham.



Emma Woodcock saw this stone profile at the Woolpacks on Kinder Scout, Edale, Peak District.

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Why Fortean?

Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

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PHENOMENOMIX

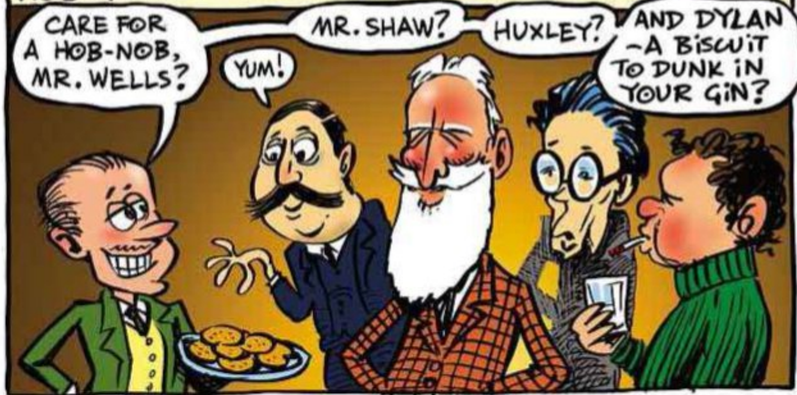
Great Occultists

EVAN MORGAN

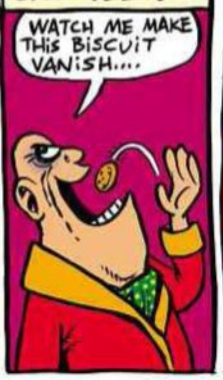
2nd Viscount Tredegar
1893 - 1949

HUNT EMERSON and KEVIN JACKSON

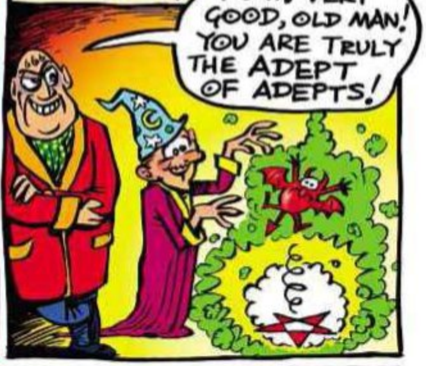
LARGELY FORGOTTEN NOW, **EVAN MORGAN** WAS A FAMOUS NAME IN THE 1930s AND 40's, WHEN HE HOB-NOBBED WITH WRITERS AND ARTISTS....


CARE FOR A HOB-NOB, MR. WELLS?
YUM!
MR. SHAW?
HUXLEY?
AND DYLAN – A BISCUIT TO DUNK IN YOUR GIN?

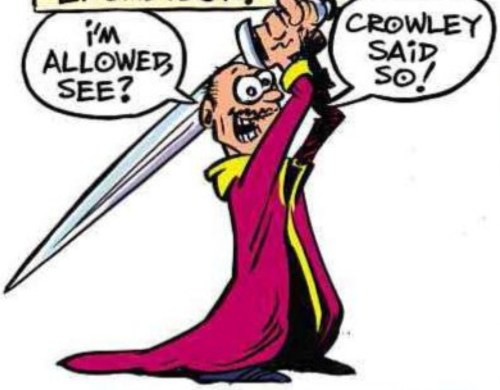
...AND, INEVITABLY, ALEISTER CROWLEY!


WATCH ME MAKE THIS BISCUIT VANISH....

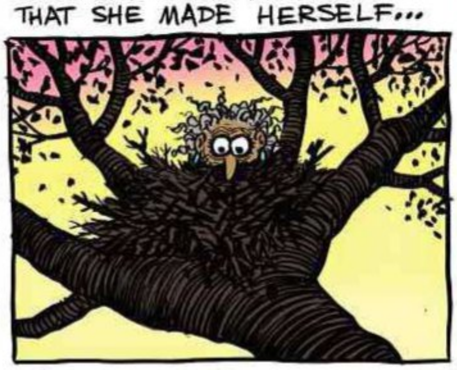
MORGAN WAS A RUBBISH POET AND HOPELESS PAINTER, BUT CROWLEY RATED HIM HIGHLY AS AN OCCULTIST!


I SAY! VERY GOOD, OLD MAN! YOU ARE TRULY THE ADEPT OF ADEPTS!

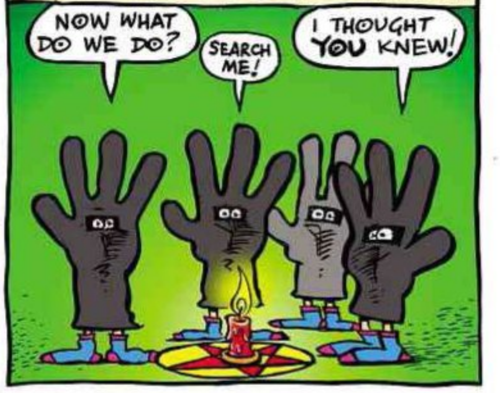
CROWLEY ALSO ASSERTED MORGAN'S RIGHT TO WIELD **EXCALIBUR**!


I'M ALLOWED, SEE?
CROWLEY SAID SO!

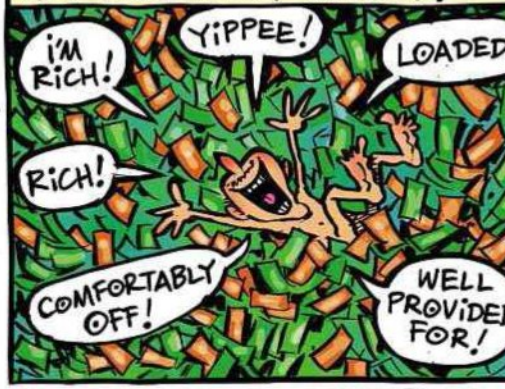
MORGAN WAS BORN INTO AN ECCENTRIC FAMILY OF WELSH ARISTOCRATS. HIS MOTHER LIVED IN LARGE BIRDS NESTS THAT SHE MADE HERSELF...



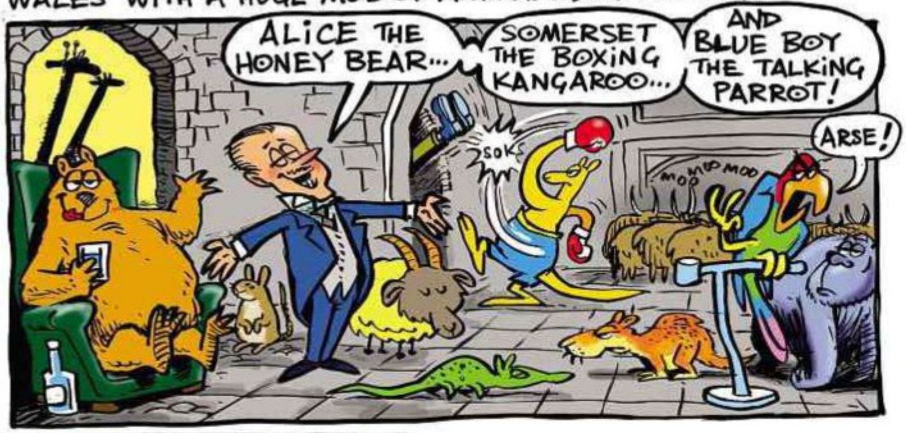
IN HIS YOUTH, MORGAN HAD BELONGED TO AN OCCULT GROUP KNOWN AS "**THE BLACK HAND**"!


NOW WHAT DO WE DO?
SEARCH ME!
I THOUGHT YOU KNEW!

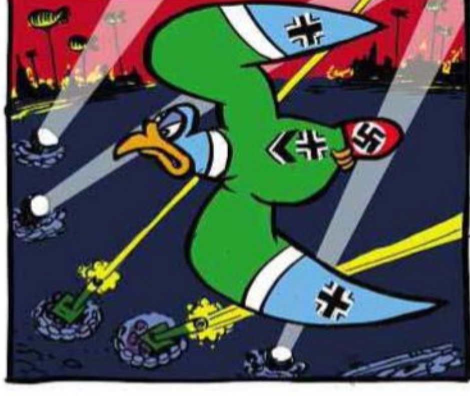
IN 1934 HIS FATHER DIED AND HE BECAME LORD TREDEGAR — AND IMMENSELY WEALTHY!


I'M RICH!
YIPPEE!
LOADED!
RICH!
COMFORTABLY OFF!
WELL PROVIDED FOR!

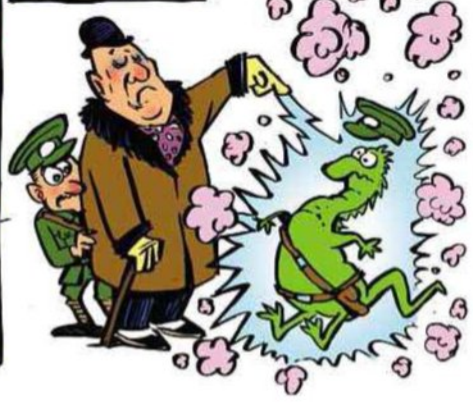
HE USED SOME OF HIS VAST FORTUNE IN STOCKING HIS CASTLE IN WALES WITH A HUGE MOB OF ANIMALS, INCLUDING:


ALICE THE HONEY BEAR...
SOMERSET THE BOXING KANGAROO...
AND BLUE BOY THE TALKING PARROT!
SOK
MOO MOO MOO
ARSE!

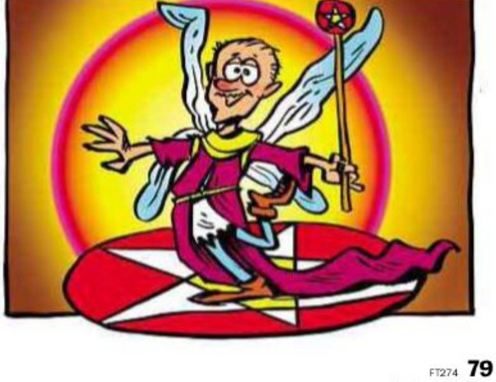
IN WORLD WAR II MORGAN WAS GIVEN COMMAND OF **MI8**, MONITORING CARRIER PIGEONS...



THREATENED WITH COURT-MARTIAL ONCE, HE GOT CROWLEY TO PUT A CURSE ON THE ARRESTING OFFICER...



MORGAN DIED IN 1949, CHILDLESS BUT SINCERELY MOURNED BY HIS MANY ARTY FRIENDS! ALDOUS HUXLEY CALLED HIM "THE FAIRY PRINCE OF MODERN LIFE"!



COMING NEXT MONTH

BONES & BLING

THE JEWELLED SKELETONS OF 16TH-CENTURY BAVARIA

TRUNKO TALES

A CRYPTOZOOLOGICAL MYSTERY SOLVED AT LAST

+

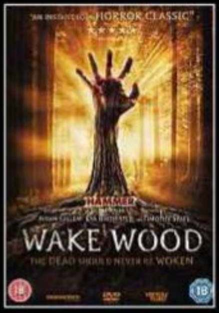
JACK KIRBY AND THE PARANORMAL, HOLY WELLS, EARLY CROP CIRCLES AND MUCH MORE...

FORTEAN TIMES 275

ON SALE 28 APRIL

COMPETITION

WIN COPIES OF WAKE WOOD



A brand new horror film from the revitalised Hammer Films, *Wake Wood* is a chilling supernatural tale set in a remote Irish village that combines the pagan paranoia of *The Wicker Man* with the be-careful-what-you-wish-for themes of "The Monkey's Paw". Directed by David Keating from a script by producer Brendan McCarthy, *Wake Wood* stars BAFTA-nominated actors Aidan Gillen, Eva Birthistle and Timothy Spall in a contemporary story of the occult.

In an attempt to cope with the grief of losing their daughter Alice, veterinarian Patrick Daly (Gillen) and his pharmacist wife Louise (Birthistle) move from the city to the remote Irish village of Wake Wood. As they settle into the close-knit community they discover that local landowner Arthur (Spall) can offer them the chance to be reunited with Alice for three precious days... but the ritual for raising the dead is bound by strict rules and conditions, which, if broken, demand a terrible price be paid.

Wake Wood (cert 18) is released in selected UK cinemas on 25 March 2011, and a DVD release from Momentum Pictures (£15.99) will follow on 28 March 2011.

Thanks to VERTIGO FILMS and MOMENTUM PICTURES, we have FIVE copies of *Wake Wood* on DVD to give away. For your chance to win, just tell us:

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na na na na
na na na na
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